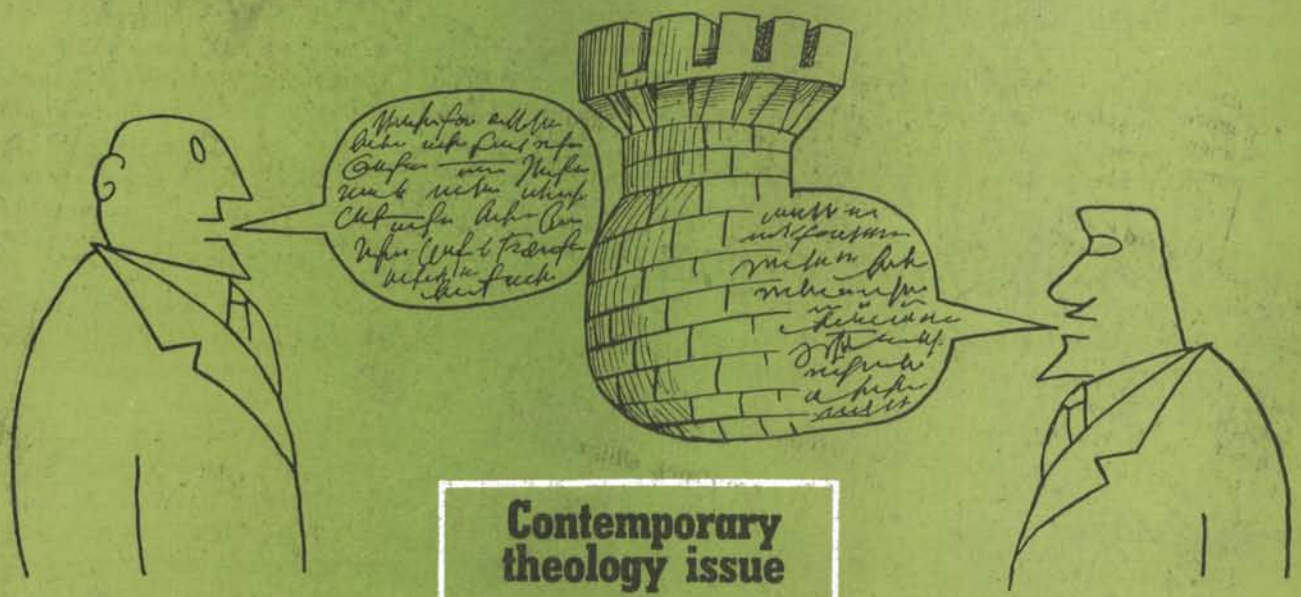
St. Charles Seminary Library
Carthagena, Ohio

$1.50 January 30, 1987

# COMMONWEAL



**Contemporary theology issue**

Catholic authority, Catholic theology, Catholic identity

## THE ISSUES BEHIND THE CURRAN CASE

Joseph A. Komonchak

## A CASE AGAINST CURRAN

John P. Hale

## OUR BROTHER THE POPE

READERS RESPOND

## THE CHALLENGE OF POST-LIBE

Paul

**ALSO: Hans Küng, Eugene J. [illegible] hir**

ST CHARLES SEM LIB
CARTHAGENA STA
CELINA OH 45822
R712 0079978N

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# CORRESPONDENCE

# Our brother the pope

CATHOLIC AUTHORITY, THEOLOGY, & IDENTITY

## Required reading

New York, N.Y.

*To the Editors:* Bravo! Bravo to William Shea for his article "The Pope, Our Brother" [November 7]. As a long-time reader of your magazine, I can honestly say that it is one of the best articles that I have read in *Commonweal* in a long time. It should be required reading for *all* clergy in *all* hierarchical churches.

As an Orthodox Christian, I had hoped that the development toward collegiality would continue to expand in the Western church, but sad to say it now appears to be going backward.

G. GREGORY DUDACK

## An easy choice

Washington, D.C.

*To the Editors:* William M. Shea's advice on "how to cope with the pope" may be of interest to those who, in effect, regard the papacy as something "to resist as the plague." But for those who accept the leadership of the pope as an instrument of God's love and providence, refusing to rationalistically qualify loyalty under the guise of "fraternal correction," a bigger problem is how to cope with errant theologians whose arrogant individualism and skepticism, and not the suppression of dissent, has "devastated Catholic intellectual and spiritual life."

Mr. Shea likens the church to a family but fails to realize that no family can live in harmony without rules and, consequently, that all members of a family are not "simply brothers." Rather, there are certain members in the church, as in a family, who are called to exercise authority as a loving service but who, nonetheless, must make certain and binding decisions, decisions that could never be carried out if contingent upon the endless process of "dialogue" so conveniently upheld by those who want salvation but not the cross.

It is becoming increasingly obvious that Catholics, in forming their consciences, must choose between the guidance of the Holy Father and that of the dissenting theologians. But it is important to remember that faith requires a realization of our limitations and a willingness to submit "our experience, our knowledge . . ." to the judgment of God's chosen leaders. In the words of St. Thomas Aquinas, who would not only "be a Catholic were he alive today" but would undoubtedly support Pope John Paul II, "We must abide rather by the pope's judgment than by the opinion of any of the theologians . . ." (*Quodlibetum*, 1X). For those who realize that it is impossible to obey God and at the same time defy His appointed leaders, the choice will not be a difficult one. More difficult to determine is whether the dissenters deny the power of the keys or simply resent not holding them.

JEFFREY GORDON

## Riding the wave

Dayton, Ohio

*To the Editors:* I find myself in the uncomfortable position of hating to agree that Shea is right. I could not have written that article. I would not speak about our brother, the Holy Father, like that; or at least if I did, I would contextualize it more within praise of his encyclicals, within acknowledgment of cultural differences between him and us, within an attempt to understand more sympathetically why he is doing what some of us perceive as the terrible things he is doing.

And yet I have to admit that I think Shea is fundamentally correct. I must confess that as I read his article I was personally convicted of pope-coping. I like to think that with all my fine distinctions and qualifications I follow the letter and spirit of *Lumen Gentium* when it comes to matters of assent, submission, and legitimate dissent. But there is another level on which I have personal questions about the pope's positions on a whole range of issues, questions deep enough to make me doubt the entire process. Shea has articulated for me things that I do not like to say or even admit to myself. I believe that he may be speaking for millions of American Catholics.

Yet his article may also do some harm. It has something of the ring of a cannon shot. It may bring about a defensive reaction and create unnecessary division and polarization. To counteract this, I wish to emphasize a couple of the more positive points that he makes. First, he shows that one can uphold papal primacy and infallibility and still call the pope firmly to account for what one perceives to be his misdeeds. Second, he puts into words not just the dilemma of many American Catholics, but also one of our deepest desires: we would love to be able to agree with the pope virtually right down the line. Few things could make us happier. It bothers us deeply when we find that we cannot do it.

I have some questions for Shea. Does

*(Continued on page 51)*

*Commonweal* is indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Catholic Periodical Index, Index of American Periodical Verse, Book Review Digest and Book Review Index. Microfilm from Vol. 1, 1924, to current issues available through University Microfilm, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and on Microfiche from Bell & Howell, Wooster, Ohio 44691. Serials Data program No.: ISSN 0010-3330. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. Copyright © 1987 Commonweal Foundation.

*Illustrations:* Cover and p. 43, Paul Valerry; p. 37, Aaron Bacall, Rothco; p. 39, Bas.,Tachydromos, Greece; p. 50, Carol Simpson.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMONWEAL

## CONTENTS

Volume CXIV, Number 2


| | |
|---|---|
| Correspondence | 34 |
| Editorials | 35 |
| Capital takes advantage: *Eugene J. McCarthy* | 37 |
| Arms control: *J. Bryan Hehir* | 38 |
| The challenge of post-liberal theology: *Paul Giurlanda* | 40 |
| Issues behind the Curran case: *Joseph A. Komonchak* | 43 |
| The way forward: a conversation with Hans Küng: *David Toolan* | 45 |
| Where he started & where he stands: *John P. Hale* | 47 |
| Screen: *Tom O'Brien* | 55 |
| Questions of argumentation: *William M. Thompson* | 60 |


## BOOKS


| | |
|---|---|
| Mephistopheles: *Francis Oakley* | 56 |
| The Desolate City: *Lawrence S. Cunningham* | 58 |
| Justice in the Marketplace: *Patrick Jordan* | 59 |


## STAFF

Editor: Peter Steinfels
Assistant Editors: David Toolan, Karen Sue Smith, Patrick Jordan
Production Editor: Anne Robertson
Poetry: Rosemary Deen
Movies: Tom O'Brien
Columnists: John Garvey, J. Bryan Hehir, Abigail McCarthy, David R. Carlin, Jr.
Staff: Karen F. Silva, Harriette Balsky, Janice Gates
Advertising Manager: Ruth E. Taylor
Publisher: Edward S. Skillin

*Commonweal*, [ISSN 0010-3330] A Review of Public Affairs, Religion, Literature, and the Arts, is published biweekly, except monthly Christmas-New Year's and July and August, by Commonweal Foundation, 15 Dutch St., New York, N.Y. 10038. Telephone: (212) 732-0800. Single copy, $1.50. Yearly subscriptions, U.S., $28; Canada, $30; foreign, $33. Special two-year rate: U.S., $49; Canada, $53; foreign, $59. All Canadian and foreign subscriptions must be paid in U.S. dollars by International Money Order or by check on a U.S. bank. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Commonweal, 15 Dutch St. New York, N.Y. 10038.

Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome but cannot be considered or returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

# Surrogate-gate

A nightmare is being played out in a New Jersey courtroom: *Whose baby is it anyhow?* The genetic mother's — Mary Beth Whitehead, who carried and gave birth to "Baby M"? Or the genetic father's and his wife's — William and Elizabeth Stern, with whom Mrs. Whitehead contracted to produce a baby for $10,000 plus at least an equal sum in expenses? There are aspects of this case which are genuinely heartrending, as the accounts of each family's attachment to Baby M make clear. There are aspects which are sickeningly bizarre, as a reading of the surrogate mother's contract reveals, with its provisions for amniocentesis and obligatory abortion if the results were not to Mr. Stern's liking, or its provisions for vastly reduced compensation "in the event the child is miscarried, dies, or is stillborn."

But it is not only the heartrending or the bizarre aspects of this case that have put it on the covers of news magazines and the front pages of the daily papers. It is the sense that something very fundamental about our society is at stake, something that sets this case apart from millions of child-custody battles that are similarly tragic in their personal dimensions.

Surrogate motherhood is a simple idea. It has become a critical issue today not because of a breakthrough in technology but because of a breakdown in moral understanding—namely, the understanding that human reproduction should be firmly placed in the matrix of personal sexuality, marital love, and family bonds. The possibility that new human life will someday be "bred" or "manufactured" has been raised by ethicists and dystopian novelists for decades. The problem has always been in admitting that this could come about not through the machinations of mad scientists or madder dictatorships, but through the best of intentions and most human of desires on the part of the folks next door.

In the Baby M case itself, surrogacy was sought not because of infertility but because Mrs. Stern believed pregnancy posed some medical risk. Is "convenience" next as a reason for hiring a surrogate to bear one's child? A legal defender of surrogate motherhood has already protested that "convenience" may be an unfair term for important although nonmedical reasons some women might have for wanting someone else to carry out their pregnancies. If married couples, infertile or not, can contract with surrogates for babies, why not singles who want children? And in the not-too-distant future, the perfection of techniques to fertilize and implant embryos will mean that couples can supply all the genetic material and need no longer be constrained by the need to find a genetic "match" in a surrogate. Only the pregnancy itself would be farmed out, creating a new demand for a pool of human incubators.

Surrogate motherhood plain and simple should be opposed by moral pressure—



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and probably not much else. Of course, one needn't take various surrogates' professions of altruism at face value. In 1980, papers and talk shows featured the enthusiastic and untroubled reports of a surrogate mother calling herself Elizabeth Kane. "I never think of it as mine," she declared. "I am simply growing it for [the father]. . . . I think it's great that a woman with a healthy body can help a woman who doesn't have one" (*New York Times*, May 27, 1980). Today Miss Kane is said to have changed her mind: "All you're doing is transferring the pain from one woman to another, from a woman who is in pain from her infertility to a woman who has to give up her baby." Nevertheless, to counter what are claimed to be purely disinterested decisions for surrogacy by anything but moral suasion seems impractical—and quite possibly unconstitutional.

Surrogate motherhood for profit is something else, however. The New Jersey bishops are quite right to insist that commercial surrogacy "exploits a child as a commodity and exploits a woman as a babymaker." Even those dealing with problems of infertility who say they "need more data" before reaching a final opinion on surrogate motherhood should realize the futility of suspending judgment if aggressive entrepreneurs are going to create a *fait accompli*.

Naturally, the new infertility-industrial complex as well as some lawyers with a vested ideological interest in an absolute "right of privacy" want to see commercial surrogacy moved from legal limbo into respectability, if necessary by submitting it to state regulation. We couldn't agree less with the *New York Times* editorial which recommends such regulation on the grounds that, after all, "the business is probably here to stay." We prefer the blunt assessment of William Pierce, president of the National Committee for Adoption: "If you regulate it, that is making a public statement that it's all right. We decided a hundred years ago we didn't want people bought and sold in this country." Commercial surrogacy should simply be outlawed under the same sort of laws that, in connection with adoption, now prohibit baby-selling in all fifty states. This is one infant industry that doesn't deserve protection.

## THE CARDINAL & ISRAEL

He was not a common pilgrim, and it proved a very uncommon pilgrimage: John Cardinal O'Connor's trip to Jordan, Israel, and Vatican City. When he entered the shrine of the Holy Sepulcher on January 1, the cardinal was accompanied by a crowd of reporters, photographers, drummers, Boy and Girl Scouts, clergy, and men with fezzes and sheathed swords. As a monsignor in the retinue recalled: "It was a scene out of a Fellini movie." And when one considers how O'Connor ran amiss of the Vatican, the Jewish groups that had urged him to embark on the trip, and his Israeli hosts in so short a sequence of events, one might be tempted to title the affair "The Cardinal Orders His Tomb." Yet the archbishop of New York has proven before not only a knack for self-inflicted controversy, but an ability to arise from it.

No doubt, responsibility for the most recent O'Connor flap — styled a "diplomatic mess" by one Vatican official and "an insult to the Jewish nation" by the *New Republic* (January 19) — rested first of all, with the cardinal. His characteristically sanguine hope to build peace in the region was not matched by awareness of the historical and political intricacies. As a member of the Vatican Council for Public Affairs (an arm of Cardinal Casaroli's secretariat of state), he should have taken more seriously Casaroli's written advice prior to the journey: "You are reminded to observe all the customary guidelines for the visit." When it came to his comments at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum, O'Connor should have stopped with his initial response: "Anything I would say here is banal." He has been forced to admit his mistakes, and in a straightforward and rather winning manner, did apologize to the people of Israel for his failures.

Behind this apology one can hope that the cardinal and his aides are engaged in serious reflection about what went wrong. One also welcomes the similar reflection occurring among the Jewish leaders whose sharp criticism of the cardinal gave the impression of an unwise determination to make Vatican recognition of Israel the pivotal issue of Catholic-Jewish relations. Neither the leverage of a Cardinal O'Connor in Rome nor tragically needed progress in the uprooting of religiously based anti-Semitism will be strengthened by lobbying efforts more suitable to congressional battles over selling AWACS to Saudi Arabia than to interfaith relations.

The Vatican position on Jerusalem is neither void of flexibility nor without merit (cf. Eugene J. Fisher, "The Pope & Israel," *Commonweal*, January 11, 1985). Contrary to the *New Republic's* misinformed and snide equation of Vatican policy toward Israel with the Kremlin's, Fisher has pointed out that the present pope has specifically recognized the legitimacy and existence of Israel as a nation and a state, and that diplomatic relations do exist between the two. Yet the Vatican might have eased tensions if it had allowed Cardinal O'Connor to meet where and with whomever he desired by simply officially distancing itself from his itinerary.

There remain merits to the trip that deserve to outlive the gaffes. Cardinal O'Connor spoke forcefully, both in Jordan and Israel, on the plight of the Palestinian people. He reiterated the Vatican call for a Palestinian "homeland," eschewing violence "even when the goals are just." (What exactly this vague language of "homeland" does or does not necessarily imply would be a good point for further Vatican clarification.) To the Jordanians, O'Connor spoke of the right of Israel to secure borders. In Jerusalem he met with Israel's president and foreign minister — in their residences — but met Jerusalem's Teddy Kollek in the mayor's office. As a consequence of his trip, the Vatican stated explicitly that "neither the state of Israel nor its sovereignty is in question."

Since Vatican II, there has been a genuine *teshuvah*, a turning, on the part of many Christians in their understanding of Jews, Judaism, Israel, and Jerusalem. In that time, Cardinal



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

O'Connor has been a strong voice against anti-Semitism. Yet his trip to the Middle East proves there is still a great deal more need for turning: for growth, understanding, sensitivity, and forgiveness.

## AN IMAGE OF HOPE

Until he was fifty, Father William F. Lynch, S.J., had written little except for a few articles in *Thought*, the Fordham University quarterly he edited from 1950 to 1956. Then the dam burst. Notice of *The Image Industries* (1959) made the front page of *Variety*; the volume won the National Catholic Book Award. In the year following came *Christ and Apollo*, which laid out the ground of the Christian literary imagination. "The weapons of art are terrible and not merely ornamental," he wrote. "They are the cognitive allies of the Holy Ghost." If you care to know the ramifications of the classic creeds of Nicaea and Chalcedon for the arts, *Christ and Apollo* will still startle and enlighten; very little written since has surpassed it.

Over the next fifteen years, Lynch published six more books, the best known of which, *Images of Hope*, issued out of a harrowing personal experience of severe mental breakdown and still a classic in the field of psychological healing. Bill Lynch knew what it meant to rise from the dead.

On January 9, after a short illness, this great friend and critic of the human imagination, age seventy-eight, died at Lenox Hill Hospital in his beloved New York City. "The Catholic imagination," he once wrote, "does not force me to imagine that at the end I must free myself from all human society to unite with God. Rather, it helps me to imagine that once I have embarked on a good thing with all its concreteness, I can and must carry it with me all the way into the unimaginable."

NATIONAL DEFICITS

## CAPITAL TAKES ADVANTAGE

The demise of labor & resources

The fears of federal deficits, of the imbalance of trade, of rising national debt seem to have gone the way of the herpes scare. They get some attention on television discussion programs but are no longer emphasized, and seldom mentioned, on the evening television news.

Economists, generally, continue to express some concern over them but with restraint, almost as though they were hedging their bets, or their professional reputations.

International businessmen, bankers, other traditional defenders of the capitalistic system, seem only slightly disturbed over conditions that used to keep them awake at night. Some even see virtue in current and prospective debts, deficits, and imbalances in trade. The same is true of publications such as the *Wall Street Journal* and *Forbes* magazine.

President Reagan who in his first inaugural address spoke of how "for decades we have piled deficit upon deficit mortgaging our future and our children's future for the temporary convenience of the present," seems less and less concerned about the national debt, or at least about the $900 billion increase that has occurred in the six years he has been in office.

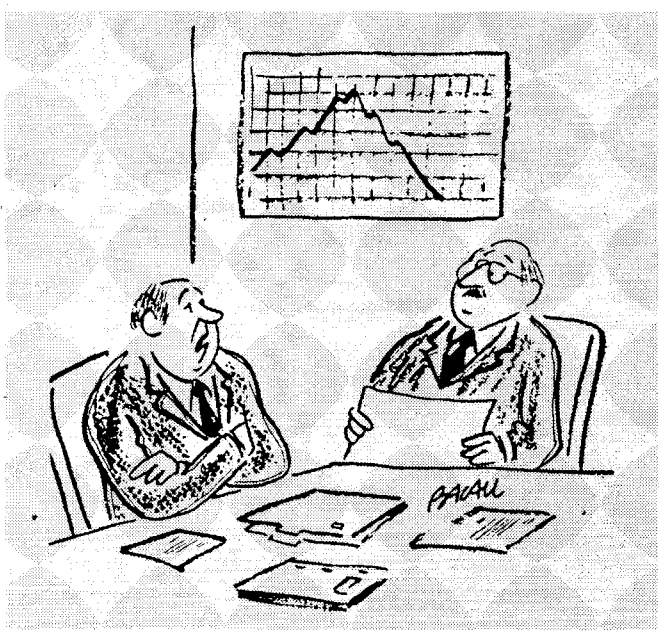
One can fairly ask "Why?" What are the reasons for these apparent changes of position and for the tolerance of conditions once held to be intolerable?

There are obvious surface explanations. For one, interest rates during the Reagan years have gone down from the inordinately high level they reached in the Carter administration. The rate of inflation which climbed to 13 percent in the last year of the Carter administration is now about 4 percent a year (a rate once considered unbearable).

There are deeper, more fundamental, reasons for the acceptance, even the defense, of debt, deficits, and imbalances, by bankers, businessmen, and their counselors and political representatives. One major reason as they see it, is that under pressure of budget deficits and mounting debt, liberals are in retreat, and domestic programs are being cut back. Second, they see that capital (of the classical land-labor-capital trinity) is gaining in its advantages, both relative and absolute, over the other factors of production.

Those who control capital and profit from that control, note a growing advantage over labor. Unemployment hovers at about 7 percent, a point at which labor analysts say management can effectively control wages and worker benefits.

The trend of wages in recent years has been downward. Average weekly wages of private non-agricultural workers in




*"The boss wants me to lay off 50 workers. I don't have the heart to tell him . . . we only have 40 workers!"*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the United States was $189 a week in 1977. Measured in 1977 dollars, the value of weekly wages in 1985 was a little over $171, a decline of $17 a week.

Downward pressure on U.S. labor is further intensified by the importation of foreign labor — legal and illegal — and by bringing in (in the name of free trade) both raw materials and manufactured goods produced by low-wage workers in countries like Taiwan, Korea, China, India. A recent news program showed steel workers in India, reported to be earning $1 a day, producing manhole covers for Baltimore, Maryland, a city which does have a steel mill, or did have one.

The pressure on American labor is further increased at home by competition from new equipment, plants, and automated machinery, developed, built, and put in place with the aid of investment credits, tax-exempt industrial bonds, and other subsidies from federal, state, and local governments.

Capital also has an advantage, currently, over a second of the classical factors of production, namely: land, and natural resources. Agricultural prices generally are depressed. In the United States, farm prices set against the prices of 1977 as an index base, are at an index number of seventy-nine. The prices of most industrial minerals — iron ore and copper, for example — are depressed, as are timber prices. Oil has been under severe downward pressure. Environmental protection is on hold.

More significant, however, than these advantages being given to capital, relative to the other two factors of production, are the integral advantages of capital and the income on it within the economic-political system itself. Capital and income on capital have achieved progressively in the United States, a preferred position, to the point that capital income, at least for tax purposes, now has a status bordering on that of the sacred monies of the temple in ancient times. Capital is developing and propagating its own theological and philosophical support. Established religions are finding that they can accommodate capitalism to their theological and moral doctrines. Fundamentalist preachers are moved to take their religious-economic beliefs into politics. At least one conference on "Capitalism and the Constitution" has been scheduled during the bicentennial observance of the adoption of that document, and many more are likely to follow.

Now even the deficits and the national debt can be made to serve the interest of capital control and concentration. In fact, the transfer of more control over capital to those already with significant control will be facilitated by the increase in the national debt. If, as is anticipated, the total national debt by 1995 will be close to $4 trillion, about three-fourths of which will be held by individuals of wealth (including foreigners) and by financial institutions and other corporations, the annual cost of servicing that debt will approximate $400 billion. The federal government will then be, as it is now in lesser measure, the instrument through which taxes, levied largely on earned income (that is, wages and salaries, the return for labor) will be collected and then transferred, and — more than that — transformed into capital, contributing to the continuing concentration of wealth and of power over wealth and wealth production. All this may explain why currently the most popular investment in the United States, possibly in the world, is in investment in future tax collections of the U.S. government.

EUGENE J. McCARTHY

*(Eugene J. McCarthy is the former senator from Minnesota and twice a candidate for the U.S. presidency.)*

## WORLD WATCH

J. Bryan Hehir

# ARMS CONTROL

## A WORLD CLASS PLAY

As the 100th Congress convenes, the most discussed foreign policy topics are Iran and Nicaragua. But the eruption of this political volcano last November should not be allowed to shunt aside the even more persisting problem of nuclear arms control. If the Iran-Nicaragua debacle had not occurred, arms control would have been the central congressional concern for this session.

The relationship of the Reagan administration and Congress on arms control is entering the third act of a play which began last summer. In August the House of Representatives, led belatedly but effectively by Les Aspin (D-Wis.), had voted: (1) to require the U.S. to abide by the limits of the SALT II Treaty; (2) to prohibit nuclear testing for one year; (3) to freeze spending for the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) at last year's level plus inflation; and (4) to continue the moratorium on testing antisatellite weapons (ASATs) against objects in space. By October, Aspin and others had brought the Senate substantially on board on SALT, ASATs, and SDI.

Act Two began over the Columbus Day weekend. The sudden announcement of a "mini-summit" at Reykjavik provided President Reagan with leverage to take the initiative on arms control away from Congress. In a last minute agreement negotiated by phone, Congress dropped its major demands lest they be perceived as impeding the president's freedom of action at the summit.

No agreements were planned for Reykjavik and none were made. Essen-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tially, the president came home with no concrete gains and with the congressional efforts of restraint now eviscerated. From one perspective, Congress had given away the store.

But this was not the focus of discussion post-Reykjavik. The dominant question was whether the *president* had given away the store (by proposing the elimination of all ballistic missiles or by considering the Gorbachev proposal for the elimination of all strategic weapons), or had doomed arms control in the 1980s by refusing to negotiate on SDI.

Act Two continued through November and December as journalists, analysts, and administration representatives tried to define what had happened at Reykjavik. This already complicated task was stymied by the Iran-Nicaragua revelations in November. Yet the results of Reykjavik require attention, for 1987 finds the superpowers with fifteen years of negotiations and not a single arms-control achievement, and with both sides prepared to move into a new stage of nuclear development.

Act Three, therefore, involves sorting out Reykjavik and determining whether Congress will renew its assertive style of last summer or maintain its passive role of autumn.

The varied evaluations of Reykjavik manifest enormous confusion and division. Secretary Shultz for example, said on October 31: "My own judgment is that in a few years we will look back at the meeting at Hofdi House as something of a watershed, a potential turning point in our strategy for deterring war and encouraging peace." Henry Kissinger, however, sees "the Reykjavik revolution" in starkly different terms: "The mélange of agreements, near-agreements, and contradictory proposals that emerged at the Reykjavik pre-summit run the risk of undermining deterrence and the cohesion of the Western alliance." And Ambassador Gerard Smith, who negotiated SALT I, sees Reykjavik as a watershed, but of a different kind than either Shultz or Kissinger depicts: "We came out of Iceland with a clearer vision of the starkness of the alternative: we can have either arms control or we can have a crash program to deploy defenses. We can't have both."

What kind of negotiations could produce such strikingly different views from informed observers? The core of the Reykjavik discussions can be reduced to three topics:

*On SDI*: an agreement to abide by the ABM Treaty for ten years; but radical disagreement on what kind of testing is permissible within the limits of the treaty and whether deployment of defenses is expected after the decade.

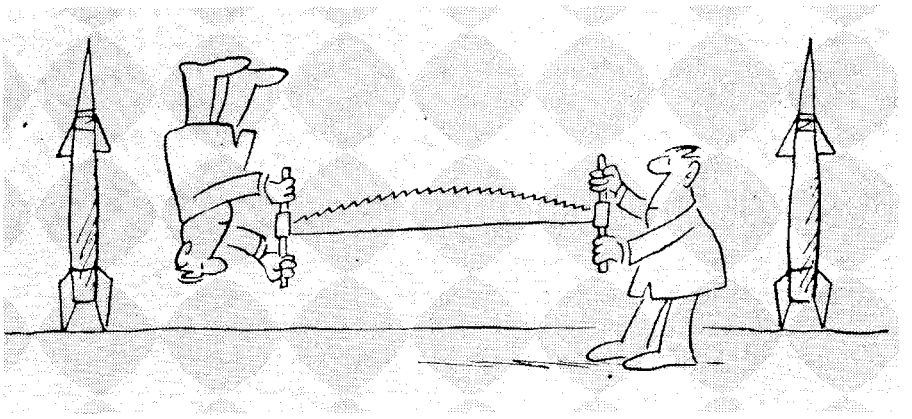
*On strategic nuclear forces*: an agreement to reduce these forces to 1,600 delivery vehicles and 6,000 warheads (a cut of about 30-50 percent); but disagreement about the use of sub-limits to restrict certain forms of weapons (e.g., Soviet SS-18s); competing proposals to eliminate all ballistic missiles in ten years (the U.S.), or all strategic weapons (the Soviets) in ten years.

*On intermediate range nuclear weapons*: an agreement to reduce them to 100 warheads in the Soviet Union and 100 in the United States, thereby withdrawing these weapons from the European theater.

Both the substance and the style of the Reykjavik meeting have fractured the normal categories of the strategic debate between the superpowers, within the NATO alliance, and in the United States. Conservative voices hail the president's refusal to bend on SDI. Arms-control advocates are intrigued by specific proposals for deep cuts or the elimination of ballistic missiles, but skeptical of the overall design and suspicious that in the end the president's most cherished goal is to proceed with SDI. Strategic analysts find the proposals for eliminating nuclear weapons and/or deterrence utopian, deceptive, or plain incompetent. James Schlesinger states the case: "For Western security the nuclear deterrent continues to represent the ultimate reality . . . A world without nuclear weapons is a utopian dream."

As Congress begins its work, therefore, it is clear that it must address the meaning of Reykjavik: Was it a breakthrough to a discussion of real reductions in nuclear arms or a breakdown of competent analysis of the dilemma of living with nuclear weapons? Is the product of Reykjavik creative opportunities or simply mass confusion? What framework should be used to interpret the possibilities and problems of the nuclear relationship in the 1980s and 1990s? Congress does not have the corner on the market for shaping this framework. Analysts in and out of Washington will be part of the larger discussion. Public opinion may again move ahead of both Congress and the president, as it did in the early 1980s.

But Congress can return to its strategy of last summer, to use the purse of funding to influence the direction of U.S. strategic policy. Congress can set limits on how SDI will go, whether testing of nuclear weapons should be supported, and what the future of the MX will be. Faced with huge budgetary deficits, defense spending becomes an issue of economics as well as strategic choices. The larger debate of the legacy of Reykjavik and the possibility of any arms-control agreements in the Reagan presidency are topics which go beyond the Congress. But Congress can be a player in the drama if it faces up to the question of Act Three by reasserting the style it was using in Act One.





LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# THE CHALLENGE OF POST-LIBERAL THEOLOGY

## TESTIMONY, COMMUNITY, & NONVIOLENCE

PAUL GIURLANDA

The Exodus works as an increasingly satisfying background story for a variety of Christian writers these days, whether their interest be feminism, economic justice, or spirituality. Nevertheless, while liberation theology, with all its inherent drama, has captured the attention of seminarians and the media (not to mention nervous church officials), it is my contention that "post-liberal" writers like Stanley Hauerwas, George Lindbeck, and Hans Frei are saying things which, in the long run, might be just as significant for North American religious thought.

Post-liberal here simply means that Hauerwas and the others mentioned *refuse to let the secular world set the agenda* for theology or for the church. They are not interested in the classic liberal task of translating Christian concepts into the language of secularity, an enterprise they regard as impossible on its face. As George Lindbeck argues in his latest book, *The Nature of Doctrine* (Westminster, 1984), Christianity is not so much like a set of translatable concepts, as it is like a *language* with an integrity of its own, a language whose grammar and vocabulary can and must simply be learned.

To say that Christianity is like a language, or, as Hauerwas might prefer, a foundational story, is to say that one does not try to get *underneath* it. The story *is* what is underneath! The Gospel narratives, for example, as Hans Frei argues forcefully and learnedly in *The Eclipse of Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (Yale, 1974) must be taken *realistically* as providing the shape of our lives, but not necessarily *historically*, i.e., as mere clues to "what really happened." The search for the exact historical background of this or that statement of Jesus, for example, probably now an indispensable moment in the interpretation of a text, can obscure a key point, namely, that the Gospel narratives are *Scripture*, a story which claims us, and not just a mine of historical data. (Here fundamentalism and liberalism — both children of Enlightenment doubt — are seen to have at least one thing in common: the narrative comes in second to a set of detachable principles.)

But these writers are not simply reviving the neo-orthodox project either, with its imperialistic rejection of philosophy and major world religions, though they have undoubtedly learned from it and its mistakes. Nor are they speaking from narrow confessional foxholes, waiting for the blessed day when doctrinal orthodoxy and conservative morality will be restored. It's worth mentioning that Frei, Hauerwas, and Lindbeck — as well as Charles M. Wood, whose *Formation of Christian Understanding* (Westminster, 1981) is appreciatively quoted by both Hauerwas and Lindbeck — come out of what a Far Western observer can only regard as the remarkable and impressive Yale theological tradition. It is a tradition (one thinks immediately of names like H. Richard Niebuhr and Jaroslav Pelikan) of concern for the stubborn, non-reducible *particularity* of Christian faith, and a profound willingness to learn from representatives of disparate traditions. Indeed, ecumenism is a major concern of both the Lutheran Lindbeck, an observer at the Second Vatican Council and commentator on Catholic affairs, and Hauerwas, who at one point found himself in the unlikely role of Methodist at the University of Notre Dame, making friends with Catholics like David Burrell. What then *are* these hard-to-categorize theologians doing? And why should it matter to the rest of us?

Perhaps one fruitful way of answering this question is to raise two traditional (and related) theological questions and see how Stanley Hauerwas, as perhaps the best known and most influential of the post-liberals, would answer them. Let us ask:

- Is it possible to do theology without resting it on a philosophy, in the sense, for example, in which much Catholic theology "rests" on Aristotle? (The traditional theological problem of faith and reason.)
- How do Christians talk to those who do not know or do not accept Jesus as Savior? (The traditional theological problem of church and world.)

When Hauerwas says, in *Peaceable Kingdom* (Notre Dame, 1983), his most extensive monograph, that "if we have a 'foundation' it is the story of Christ," he is not simply indulging in pious talk. He is disclosing an entire theological program, a program which will seek to avoid the twin perils of fideism and rationalism. Fideism can be looked at as a foundationalism of revelation; rationalism as a foundationalism of reason. Both are attempts to find firm ground upon which to build the house of certainty. In their search for security the fundamentalist and the hidebound positivist are cousins. They

PAUL GIURLANDA, F.S.C., *teaches in the religious studies department of St. Mary's College, Moraga, California. He just published* Faith and Knowledge *(University Press of America).*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are, in other words, both reacting to an old human problem: the encounter with those who think differently, an encounter which inevitably raises uncomfortable doubts about our own position.

Clearly, if one sets up these two terms (revelation and reason) as opposites, any attempt to deal with the "problem" of their opposition will be forever frustrating. Hauerwas refuses to see the issue in such terms:

> "Revelation" is not a qualifier of the epistemic status of a kind of knowledge, but rather points to the *content* of a certain kind of knowledge. We call knowledge about God "revelation," not because of the rationality or irrationality of such language, but because of what that knowledge is about.

Hauerwas can agree with *both* sides in the ancient dispute, with both Justin Martyr and (to use the modern example) Karl Barth. He can do this because, in a sense, both sides are right, and both sides are wrong. In other words, they got the *problem* wrong: "All knowledge of God is at once natural and revelatory," Hauerwas has written. How can Hauerwas have it both ways? Because *all* knowledge for Hauerwas is based on testimony, on tradition. To know *anything* is always to know it in the horizon in which our language and culture have made it possible for us to know it. All knowledge, in other words, is contextual, valid only within a particular community of interpretation, and the word *story* in the phrase "story of Christ" gives this away.

That knowledge is contextual will come as no shock to anyone today; it is a commonplace for many people who can't agree on much else, from Marxists to Heideggerians.The philosopher whom Hauerwas quotes more than any other on this point is, however, the neo-Aristotelian Alasdair MacIntyre, whose *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, 1981) argues that morality makes sense only within a community, i.e., a group of people who share a vision of the ends of human endeavor and of the virtues necessary to get there. Without such shared vision, conversation — and thus virtue — is impossible. It is worth nothing that MacIntyre is frankly pessimistic about the possibility of such community in contemporary North American culture. Obviously, from the point of view of Christian post-liberalism, this pessimism is a form of theological despair.

Against such a background, then, Hauerwas can see the ancient problem of reason and revelation as the problem of Christianity's relationship to the non-Christian world: how does our story relate to those strangers outside our gates who do not share our language and culture? How does it account for them? It is an intellectual problem, to be sure; but it is an intellectual problem because it is first of all a problem for a group of people trying to understand who they are and what they should do.

Thus the *first question* we wanted to put to Hauerwas — is it possible to do theology without resting it ultimately on philosophy — is shown to be phrased in an unacceptable way. It is phrased in a way which suggests that philosophy and theology need to be related to each other as foundation is related to dwelling. But for Hauerwas, the "foundation" is simply the story, and *this is as true for philosophy as it is for theology*. That is, both these enterprises are carried on within the context of a set of goals, methods, and criteria which dwell in a particular group of people. That these groups are not sealed off from each other, that they have permeable boundaries, is precisely the root of the problem: how do we *reconcile* our various communities of interpretation?

The first question, it turns out, collapses into the *second question* we wanted to ask: Is it possible to see knowledge as communally based without giving up communication with other traditions and cultures? One of the professed merits of the notion of universal reason is that it enables us to see each other, not as strangers, but as sharers in a common *logos*. We can agree with each other because we are all rational creatures. Without the transcultural certainty of universal reason, we are dizzy, frightened, without handholds, without points of reference. Ultimately, different human communities seem to be simply *barbaroi* to each other, those who utter nonsense syllables, those who are not human. When one encounters such strangers, one unsheathes one's sword.

But the trouble with universal reason is that what seems like universal reason to us is not all that universal to others. Mao tse Tung, Milton Friedman, and Adolf Hitler are alike in their claim to represent reason. Universal reason has been — and still is — used to justify the imposition of one culture's view of reality upon another. Indeed, perhaps the very notion of universal reason has within it the seeds of a narrow will-to-power. Writes Hauerwas:

> Violence and coercion become conceptually intelligible from a natural law standpoint. The universal presumptions of natural law make it more difficult to accept the very existence of those who do not agree with us; such differences in principle should not exist.

Older Catholics may ask almost instinctively: But how *do* we relate to the rest of the world if we cannot assume, on philosophical grounds, that we can have a point of agreement? Younger Catholics (and others) may wish to ask: And how do we avoid falling back into the kind of religious intolerance which is not only not dead in the twentieth century, but seems to be growing in strength? Once again: how can we escape relativism and fideism? We seem to be trapped in the hopeless choice of a relativism which imprisons us in our own culture, and a universalism which is only the cleverly disguised arrogance of a culture powerful enough to impose its will on others.

It is at this most delicate point that Hauerwas comes to our aid, asking a profound question: What if we discover a community *in whose language and practices, in whose tradition,* is an attitude of suffering love toward the stranger?

Every community must have some account of the "others" — the strangers who do not speak our language. For most



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

communities that account is essentially secondary and defensive. But the Christian community not only has an account of the rest of the world, it is in some way *constituted* by its mission to that world; it is *essentially* a missionary movement. For Hauerwas, to say that Christian convictions are "true" is, in part, to say that they are not simply "true for us," but for others as well:

> The less sure we are of the truth of our religious convictions the more we consider them immune from public scrutiny. But in the process we lose what seems essential to their being true, namely, that we be willing to commend them to others.

Hauerwas is by no means advocating, then, a retreat into sectarianism or a return to an imagined golden age when everyone thought alike. He argues that the Christian must be open to the stranger and his or her ideas. But what this openness to the stranger *means* is that we must love even those strangers who make themselves our enemies, with a love which must extend to the suffering of violence. The Christian analogue for the concern for universal reason as the basis for universal human community is simply the love of the stranger, the love of the enemy, whose exemplification is the cross of Jesus Christ.

To those who believe that, through technique or coercion or education we can come, finally, to universal agreement, Christianity preaches the cross. The cross here is not simply the symbol of the inadequacy of all human notions of God, as in Tillich; still less is it the event of the Atonement. Rather, the cross is the revelation that the reign of God will only come through the suffering love of the people of God as they open themselves to the stranger outside the gates.

And so, odd as it may seem, the philosophical problem of truth, the epistemological question, is inseparably linked with the notion of a nonviolent community, a community willing to risk death rather than to coerce anyone. The nonviolent character of the community is what makes its knowledge authentic and dependable. For only a community which has been freed of the need to coerce can know the truth. According to Hauerwas, only a community which knows how to deal with its own mistakes — how to accept forgiveness — can continue to be open to the novelties which the future continually discloses:

> To be forgiven means that I must face the fact that my life actually lies in the hands of others . . . We cannot live to insure our ultimate security, but must learn to live on a day-to-day basis . . . For, ironically, when we try to exclude surprises from our life, we are only more subject to the demonic.

To see nonviolence as central to the Christian community is to invite a host of objections. The argument between "realists" like Reinhold Niebuhr and those who "take Jesus seriously" is an old one. Hauerwas claims that it is possible to trust the words of Jesus, and that if we do this, we will find just enough truth to take the next step forward. Here Hauerwas aligns himself with those, like John Howard Yoder, who see the role of the church to *be* church rather than to improve the world. For Hauerwas, as for Yoder, the task of Christians is not to "build up the kingdom of God" nor even to make the world a slightly better place, but is to be *faithful*.

To Catholics, and to many mainstream Protestants, Hauerwas's project will appear naive, even dangerous. But Hauerwas, and those writing in the same vein, are not so easily dismissed, if only because they have pointed to some real difficulties with the "liberal" consensus among middle-of-the-road Protestants and Catholics. Liberal Christianity, one might argue, had little of force to say to the Nazis, has little of force to say to Caspar Weinberger. It has little to *say* because it allows secularity to control the vocabulary of the discussion. And if *that* is the case, one might wonder why one should bother with translating the rather cumbersome Christian mythological language in the first place. (Do we really *need* the cross to remind us that life involves suffering? Do we really *need* the resurrection to remind us that suffering can lead to triumph?) Though this may be caricature, Hauerwas might argue, it also may, like the caricatures of liberalism drawn by Flannery O'Connor, point to some harsh truths. And one of those harsh truths is that many of us no longer really find the teachings of Jesus more compelling than the wisdom of the world.

True to their critical nature, liberals might reply that those who claim to be true believers are often hiding their doubts, rather than dealing with them; that it is not, after all, so easy to discover the implications of Christ's teachings today; and that, finally, there is a certain intellectual amnesia, even dishonesty, in attacking liberalism when the benefits of liberalism — freedom of religion, press, and speech, for example — are not brought to mind. Perhaps it is precisely liberalism's bittersweet success to have had its achievements taken for granted — and thus unacknowledged. (None of the post-liberals has yet said that he would prefer the Geneva of Calvin, the Rome of Gregory XVI, or even the Paris of Aquinas, to twentieth-century New Haven.) "What good is freedom of speech," the post-liberals might reply, "with nothing to say?" And so it goes. Perhaps one clue to the integrity of post-liberals will be whether they can resist manipulation by the left *and* right as well as Karl Barth did.

More positively, Hauerwas's emphasis on Christianity as community, a very specific community with a unique nonviolent way of experiencing reality, a unique language of suffering love, will ring true for those many people who look not so much for truth as for truthful people, not so much for ideals, as for people who embody them. Does such a people of God *exist* as a vibrant and persuasive alternative to a culture caught between macho posturing and self-indulgence? For Hauerwas, this is the real question, and to answer it in the negative would be effectively to deny the existence of God as described and revealed in the Christian Scriptures. Obviously, such a people, did it exist, would not be co-terminous with the *societas perfecta* of the Catholic church or with any other traditional body. But it would certainly be visible to those who looked, perhaps in some surprising places.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# ISSUES BEHIND THE CURRAN CASE

JOSEPH A. KOMONCHAK

## THE CHURCH & MODERNITY: FROM DEFENSIVENESS TO ENGAGEMENT

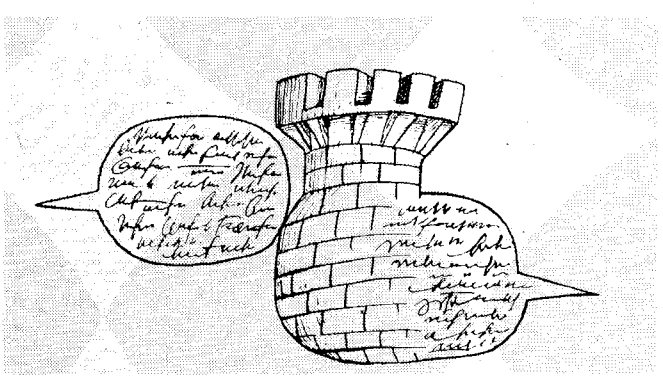
Behind the well-rehearsed differences between the Vatican and Charles Curran over specific moral issues and over the issues of assent and dissent, lie fundamental differences over Catholic identity and mission in the modern world and over the role theology plays in determining them. These are implied in the judgment of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith that Father Curran can no longer be considered "suitable or eligible to exercise the function of a professor of Catholic theology."

The congregation's judgment presupposes that it is the hierarchy, and particularly the Vatican, which has the chief or at least final say in determining whether something is or is not Catholic theology, whether someone is or is not a Catholic theologian. "Catholic theologians . . . do not teach on their own authority but by virtue of the mission they have received from the church." That mission requires that a theologian's views agree in all respects with official magisterial teachings of the hierarchy, for there is an "inherent contradiction" when "one who is to teach in the name of the church in fact denies her teaching."

In this process of reasoning, fidelity to all official teaching and explicit ecclesiastical authorization play the critical roles. One can draw from it a definition of a "Catholic theologian" as a person who is formally authorized by the hierarchy to teach what the church teaches and to do so in the name of the church. It does not appear that "theology" may include a moment critical of official doctrine, and "Catholic" means "hierarchically authorized."

Now anyone with much knowledge of the history of the church and of theology will recognize that this way of determining the meaning of the phrase "Catholic theology" represents a severe contraction of the meaning of both words. The adjective "Catholic" was first employed by church fathers precisely in opposition to sectarian and regional claims; it referred to the broad, worldwide communion of churches engaged in their creative and transformative encounter with the ancient culture. Newman was converted by his discovery of this rich meaning of Catholicity in Augustine's repudiation of the sectarianism of the Donatist heresy. Later, as a Catholic, he urged it against what he saw as a new and frightened Novatianism, hiding from the world. But in the narrow, canonical sense now being urged, there is a danger that the word "Catholic" will again be deprived of its inner meaning of comprehensiveness and inclusiveness and become simply the bureaucratically controlled self-designation of one of the many denominations competing at the margins of the modern world. It is symptomatic that some suggestions have been made that the U.S. bishops copyright the use of the adjective!

Similarly, at the very time Christian reflection began to be called "theology," it was a central part of the new intellectual experiment of the medieval university, where it held an honored place among the sciences of the day. If theology differed from them in the derivation of its first principles, it did not fear to justify itself by comparison with common intellectual methods and criteria, to engage contemporary challenges with a remarkable intellectual courage, and to use the new philosophical and historical resources being recovered from



REV. JOSEPH A. KOMONCHAK *teaches theology in the department of religion and religious education at the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Curran case is now under review by an academic committee at Catholic University. We hope the committee affirms that Father Curran offers a model of scholarly, responsible dissent that should be prized, not disqualified, by a genuinely Catholic faculty. THE EDITORS

the ancient world for a critical mediation and reinterpretation of traditional authorities. Theology was carried out within the church, but theologians did not need ecclesiastical mandate and their work was measured by more demanding criteria than the simple repetition of magisterial teachings.

How then did it happen that "Catholic" and "theology" were so narrowed in their reference and use? Two reasons, at least, can be adduced. The first was the contraction of Catholic Christianity into the anti-modern Roman Catholicism constructed in the last two centuries as a response to the developments that produced the modern Western world. The church emerged from the near chaos of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic eras gravely weakened spiritually, intellectually, administratively, politically, and financially. In the course of the next 150 years, it constructed a new form of Catholicism as a counter-society autonomous and sovereign, centralized and bureaucratized, prizing clarity, order, and unity.

The whole purpose of this new construction was anti-modern, designed to legitimate and render plausible a Catholic counterculture whose devotions and dogmas were an antidote to the spread of liberalism in economics, society, politics, and culture. But paradoxically this Roman Catholicism, in its near identification of Christianity with the institutionalized church, in its ever-increasing centralization and bureaucratization, was a characteristically modern phenomenon. Counter-society and counterculture confirmed one another, deriving much of their internal strength and purpose from an official interpretation of liberal modernity as the apostasy which led Pius X to fear that it might be "a foretaste and perhaps the beginning of those evils which are reserved for the last days and that there may be already in the world of the 'Son of Perdition' of whom the Apostle speaks."

The Swiss sociologist F.-X. Kaufmann has referred to this development as *die Verkirchlichung des Christentums*, literally "the churchifying of Christianity" — or the contraction of Christianity into the church institution. One element integral to this change was the domestication of theology. Theology now became an enterprise undertaken in church institutions and seminaries — apart from the centers of modern intellectual culture. Its chief audience was the church and, within the church, the clergy. Off in what Bernard Lonergan called their "dogmatic corner," theologians engaged in activities largely intelligible and of interest only to themselves, careless of and irrelevant to the larger cultural and social demands and challenges of the day. Theology's main function was the defense and explanation of the official positions adopted by the hierarchical leaders of the counter-society. Its practitioners came under the increasing bureaucratic control of the hierarchy at the very time when, as Hans Urs von Balthasar puts it in *The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church* (Ignatius Press, $12.95), "Rome could not adapt her spiritual horizon to the radical changes brought about by the French Revolution and particularly by German Idealism and its incalculable consequences." Rome's defensive and distrustful fear "manifested itself in consistent rejection (practically without exception) of all Catholic attempts to meet the modern intellectual with empathy and dialogue." Nothing less than "an atmosphere of terror" was created, "an artificial, paralyzing quiet." For lack of an intellectual environment within which to meet the challenge, "philosophers and theologians worked mostly on their own, producing only partial answers, and, as isolated individuals, they could easily be disposed of. Their corpses bestrew Denzinger for more than a century . . . ."

A second reason why we are once again at loggerheads over this narrowed notion of "Catholic theology" lies in the interpretation of the Second Vatican Council and of its aftermath. At the first session of the council, a series of draft documents was presented which the young Joseph Ratzinger described as marked by the "anti-

## The way forward: Talking with Hans Küng

Last November *Commonweal*'s David Toolan spoke with Hans Küng in New York City. Among other topics covered were issues of authority and dissent in the Catholic church today.

TOOLAN: What do you think of the Vatican's current actions?

KÜNG: If you want an explication of the context of Rome's present attitude, you have to see that the Catholic church in the Second Vatican Council achieved an integration of the two great paradigm changes after the Middle Ages. We integrated the paradigm change of the Reformation: vernacular language, participation of the people in the liturgy and the church, collegiality, people of God. . . . We used the arguments for the vernacular that Martin Luther employed four hundred years ago. But we were not absolutely consistent. Had we been, we would have had to introduce the marriage of priests or optional celibacy. Pushed by the American bishops especially, we also achieved the integration of the modern paradigm: freedom of conscience, freedom of religion, and a new attitude toward Judaism and world religions.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

modernist neurosis'' of the previous several decades. In a series of dramatic events, these texts were rejected by the council members, who chose instead to follow Pope John's call not to indulge the prophets of doom who saw nothing in the modern world but prevarication and ruin. Rather than repeat condemnations, the Holy Father had said, the council should offer a positive vision of the Christian message. In a set of documents markedly different in orientation, language, and content from those first presented to it, the council authorized a different response to modernity from that enshrined in modern Roman Catholicism.

In the intentions of their authors, the council texts may have been only reformist, and this may have been true from a theological standpoint as well. Nonetheless, these documents proposed a series of changes in the internal life of the church and in its relations to the world which possessed revolutionary sociological potential. The call to reform, renewal, and *aggiornamento* placed every aspect of Catholic life under critical examination. The far more nuanced evaluation of the modern social, political, and cultural world weakened the sense of the need for the dramatically segregated identity of the pre-conciliar system. The call for local churches to assume responsibility for an inculturation of the Gospel in their various circumstances undercut the uniformity and centralization which had marked modern *Roman* Catholicism.

That these changes did not have to produce revolution can, I suppose, be argued. But that their effect, at least in many parts of the Western world, was the sudden collapse of the church's anti-modern counter-society and counterculture, cannot be denied. The church changed more in ten years than it had in the previous hundred, most spectacularly perhaps in the abandonment of the specifically modern and anti-modern way of conceiving and realizing a distinct Roman Catholic identity.

These changes involved developments in theology that have been no less dramatic. Theologians imitated the council itself in largely abandoning the language and methods of Neo-Scholasticism. They embraced many of the disciplines which had developed as the intellectual instruments and effects of modernity. Many of them began to refuse the domesticated role assigned them in the recent past, to locate themselves in non-ecclesiastical institutions, to question the modern rules of the theological enterprise, to measure their work by other than ecclesial criteria, and to address broader public issues and audiences.

These changes, remarkable both for their suddenness and their scope, have produced the situation in which we now find ourselves, wondering what happened and why, what has been good in it and what bad, and what can be done about it.

---

The principal compromise here was that, practically, the bishops were not able to integrate democracy in Rome. It is said that the church is not a democracy, but it's also not a medieval, hierocratic, pre-modern system of the *ancien régime* type either. The whole question today is who will ultimately come through. Will the pope and the curia be able to reimpose on the Catholic community the medieval, Counter-Reformation, anti-modernist paradigm? Or will we finally, despite this setback, move again under a new pope? I am sure that under the present pope nothing will basically move to what I would call the post-modern paradigm — which implies another attitude in most fields.

TOOLAN: What would you say, however, if you were trying to find common ground with sensible, critical conservatives? I think of a recent book by Robert Bellah and his colleagues on American culture where the argument is made that our individualism destroys any sense of public good. Sensible conservatives — not reactionaries — are concerned about some very real weaknesses in the Enlightenment paradigm.

KÜNG: I think we progressive theologians could agree to a great extent with conservative thinkers on such a criticism of the modern paradigm. I am also a critic of the Protestant paradigm as divisive and destructive of the unity of believers. It has the consequence of continually dividing people into smaller and smaller churches. So yes, I think we could agree with much conservative criticism of both the Reformation and modern paradigms. I agree with the pope on many of his criticisms of modern society. But the real way is not to go back to Catholic Poland as he believes. The way is to go forward on the line traveled by those people who showed in recent decades that religion can be, at one and the same time, preserving of the old values certainly, but also liberating. I do not see a contradiction in these two functions.

But if the proposal is to go back to an authoritarian religion, then we will only succeed in alienating people within the church and also Protestant churches. I cannot imagine that the Catholic clergy, sisters, intellectuals, and even ordinary people would be willing to go back to the medieval paradigm which prescribes everything in the bedroom. Restoration is the great illusion.

TOOLAN: Of course conservatives would claim that they are merely being faithful to the spirit of Vatican II, or to the tradition. The tension I see here seems to lie between the spirit of Vatican II and the Code of Canon Law.

KÜNG: The new code is precisely an expression of the medieval paradigm. For instance, the code puts women in the same state of dependency and inferiority that they suffered in the Middle Ages and before modern times. I mean it is a medieval code. The words are Vatican II but the spirit remains that of medieval clericalism, authoritarianism, and a passive laity.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Cardinal Ratzinger's revised assessment is well known. The years since Vatican II, he maintains, have disappointed the glorious hopes of its popes and bishops. Instead of a great leap forward, there has been a long process of decay, responsibility for which rests with those who went beyond what the council actually said and did, invoking a false "spirit of the council" in order to betray its letter. For the cardinal, the solution can only be a return to the council's letter and true spirit, the restoration of the balance upset by progressives.

Part of this restoration involves the tightening of the bonds of ecclesiastical discipline apparent in the new Code of Canon Law, a reassertion of Roman authority, the appointment of "stronger" bishops, and actions against bishops considered too pliant. Part of it is the attempt to bring theologians back under ecclesiastical control, particularly by a reaffirmation of the rules elaborated under the previous regime.

I think it important to note these things, because I do not believe that the recent efforts at restoration are understandable (I do not say justifiable) except in the light of the experiment of Vatican II and the ambiguous experience of its aftermath. The departure from what were modern Roman Catholic attitudes and strategies has, after all, been dramatic; and it would be a brave soul who would try to describe exactly what has taken their places or to argue that it is in all respects better. Some effort to regain a sense of ecclesiastical identity and sense of purpose was probably inevitable. The real question is what goals ought to be pursued and what methods followed. And here is where one may question whether the appeal to the council itself is adequate.

Among the majority of bishops and theologians at the council there was more agreement about the inadequacy of the modern Roman Catholic system than about what might usefully and effectively replace it. It was more typical of the council texts to postpone solutions to grave ecclesial and theological questions than to offer clear answers. The theological debates that followed Vatican II revealed divisions among the council's architects that were not visible during the conciliar debates.

As Cardinal Ratzinger himself has noted, the post-conciliar theological division bears a certain resemblance to the debate at the University of Paris in the late thirteenth century. The church then faced a cultural challenge of equal significance to the one it faces today and also found itself divided between the "ancients" and the "moderns." In both cultural crises, two prototypical responses were offered which, at the risk of great oversimplifying, I will call Bonaventuran and Thomist. Bonaventure's Neo-Augustinianism is deeply suspicious of the appeals to the new reason and prefers an ancient, more organic view of the faith and a more meditative, even monastic type of theology. The Thomist feels at ease in the new intellectual environment and believes that, as earlier in the church's history, the church can once again despoil the Egyptians. For the one group the natural home of theology is the church and even the monastery. For the other, theology can be as much at home in the academic environment and has a public role that is not an accessory but an intrinsic dimension of its critical reflection on the church's traditional message.

There are great differences in the two cultural situations, however. In the high Middle Ages, although there was an alien intellectual challenge, there was also something like a living Christian culture which sustained the life of the great mass of largely illiterate believers. Today there is no common Christian culture, and the problem is rather one of making the very case that Catholic faith is more than a vestigial appendix in a secularized body politic. Even more, the great Thomist venture was the all-too-brief effort to engage a major philosophical and scientific movement at its start, whereas the issue today is one of responding to a process of modernization which is already centuries-old. This modernization, furthermore, is a process to which the church had until fairly recently counterposed only a negative and condemnatory attitude, and to meet which it had not encouraged the fundamental philosophical, historical, and scientific work necessary for an adequately critical response.

There is today a group of militant traditionalists who think that the answer to present problems lies in a return to the earlier attitude and its counter-societal strategies. For all the self-congratulatory noise they are making, the Vatican's position, at least as represented by Cardinal Ratzinger, is more subtle. Contemporary "Bonaventurans" want to leap back beyond the preconciliar attitudes to an earlier, pre-modern vision of the faith, but, rather inconsistently, they retain several of the modern anti-modern strategies, notably the centralized bureaucratic structures of authority, the identification of teaching with legislation, and the reduction of assent to obedience. The "Thomists" want to engage the post-modern challenge head-on, but they face the enormous problem of explaining how their project can succeed in the circumstances of a cultural individualism which in its extremes, even within the church, denies the very notion of communal authority and in face of questions so fundamental and critical that they would daunt even a latter-day Aquinas.

The problem, then, is twofold. How does the church maintain the integrity of its faith and its structure in the modern and post-modern era? How does theology serve a church now acutely aware of its missionary and evangelistic tasks in that era? The two questions intersect; one cannot be solved before or without the other. To cultivate a view of theology which presupposes a common Christian culture and is more monastic than academic, more epiphanic than critical, runs a new sectarian danger of a profoundly un-Catholic sectarianism. On the other hand, to appeal simply to modern traditions of intellectual and academic freedom is to place one's hopes in a liberalism that has not been any more successful in preventing cultural disarray than it has been in overcoming economic inequalities.

Sadly, as in economics, it is often made to appear that there is no third way between a *laissez faire* policy and a bureau-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cratically managed regime. I have seen defenders of Cardinal Ratzinger unjustly accuse Father Curran of a wild appeal to democracy in the church and defenders of Father Curran equally unfairly charge the cardinal with "fascism." The church, both men, and the issues deserve better. The painful way in which this one case has played itself out is testimony enough of how severely the church was retarded in its ability to meet the cultural and social challenges of modernity under the regime of modern Roman Catholicism. The Second Vatican Council was more prophetical than analytical, more hopeful than critical, when it turned away from that regime. Father Curran and Cardinal Ratzinger, and their failed conversation, typify how difficult it is to find another way in which the church may fulfill its role today.

The cardinal, I think, would agree that his cultural and theological instincts are more Bonaventuran than Thomist. Father Curran works more according to the Thomist ideal, but he has been frank in admitting that his own work lacks the critical foundations on which an ideal-typically Thomist response to a new culture and within a changing church must be built. The need for such foundations is even greater today, of course, than in St. Thomas's day when Aristotle could be considered "the master of those who know." It is not one philosopher's thoughts that the theologian must engage today, but a whole intellectual world in which the metaphysics that underlay classic Christian theology is widely denied, where the human sciences are the chief rival to a theological understanding of human life, and where, in both philosophy and science, there is little agreement on the most basic methodological issues. As Bernard Lonergan saw so well, the best way to follow St. Thomas today is by the most careful and difficult effort to lay new foundations for a critical mediation of the tradition in a transformed cultural and social context.

Such an enterprise requires from authority more patience than Bonaventure's sympathizers showed in the thirteenth century and from theologians a good measure of Aquinas's intellectual courage. Both virtues being, unfortunately, again rather rare, it is not surprising that many people in the church will regard the effort as an impossible ideal and take refuge either in an undiscerning accommodation to modernity or an equally uncritical retreat into authoritarian sectarianism, with each party justifying its choice by the excesses of the other. In either of these cases, it is something other than Catholic theology which will be attempted, and, if they are considered to exhaust the options, it will be the saddest conclusion to this whole sad affair — that the deeply Catholic effort at a creative and critical engagement with modern culture will be postponed yet again.

**CATHOLIC AUTHORITY, CATHOLIC THEOLOGY, CATHOLIC IDENTITY**

# WHERE HE STARTED & WHERE HE STANDS

## A CASE AGAINST CHARLES CURRAN

JOHN P. HALE

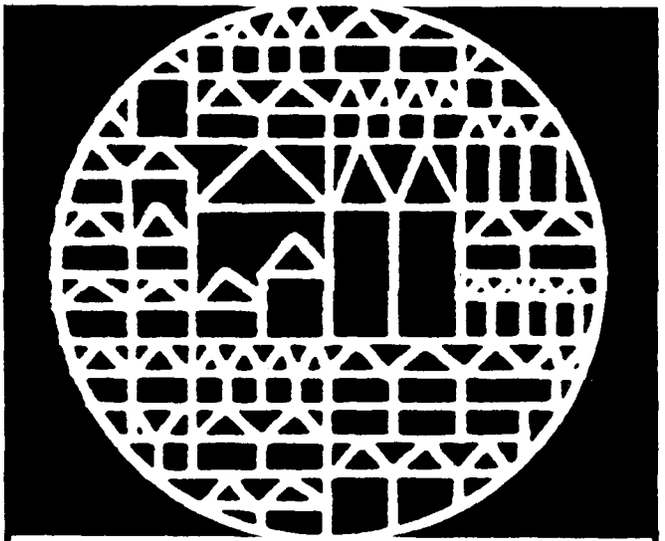
Over the past half year, the press and TV have elevated to national prominence what would in the past have been a matter of internal church discipline, of interest only to a few, as the Vatican set about to revoke the license of Father Charles E. Curran to teach as a Catholic theologian. Father Curran, a long-time faculty member of Catholic University, was clearly willing to take his case to the public contending that the Vatican was attempting to muzzle his search for truth, to stifle his right to dissent on issues on which his church had not spoken infallibly. Father Curran's posture has struck a responsive chord among many American Catholics respectful of academic freedom and reared in the tradition of free speech. When one looks more closely, however, at the history of Father Curran's conflict with his church and when one examines more closely the teachings of Father Curran which brought the conflict to a head after some twelve years of patient Vatican negotiation, a sorrowful picture unfolds of a highly intelligent, hard-working, and respected priest who rejected his church's leadership on one issue and then, propelled by his own logic, moved at an ever escalating rate to reject church teaching in almost every aspect of sexual morality. Starting with his conclusion that artificial contraception was legitimate within marriage, he moved on to conclude that marriage was dissoluble, that fornication was permissible, that abortion could, in some circumstances, be acceptable, and that sodomy was not necessarily wrong.

To put the Curran affair in focus, one has to start with the early 1960s. The issue was artificial contraception. Science had made what appeared at the time to be great progress in the development of safe mechanical and chemical means to prevent conception. In the developed countries, at least, science

JOHN P. HALE *is a Manhattan-based trial lawyer who regularly advises and represents the Archdiocese of New York City on public policy questions.*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



**CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGIZING**

**in every issue . . .**

***Recent contributors:***

● EUGENE BOROWITZ ● SIDNEY CALLAHAN ● DENISE LARDNER CARMODY ● CHARLES CURRAN ● ELISABETH SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA ● ROBERT IMBELLI ● MARGARET R. MILES ● SEBASTIAN MOORE ● PHEME PERKINS ● WILLIAM M. SHEA ● WILLIAM M. THOMPSON ● PHYLLIS TRIBLE ● PAUL VAN BUREN ● ELIE WIESEL ●

**COMMONWEAL**

*15 Dutch St., New York, N.Y. 10038*

**Trial subscription offer: 11 issues for $9**

**Name** _____

**Address** _____

**City, State, Zip** _____

☐ **I prefer a full year's subscription at $28.** 1/30/87

had also made great strides in reducing infant mortality and in prolonging the average life. There was a new awareness of hunger in large sections of the undeveloped world as rising populations canceled economic gains. In highly advanced countries, the desire to limit family size was heightened as parents sought to provide increased economic opportunity for their children. Smaller families were seen as the answer.

Science appeared to have produced the perfect solution. By allowing husband and wife to have sexual relations when they chose —free of the risk of pregnancies — tensions would be lessened within the family. Children could be spaced and be more adequately provided for. Marriages would be strengthened. Family life would prosper. In the undeveloped or developing nations, runaway population growth would be controlled. The specter of starvation would recede.

What stood in the way, at least in part, was the teaching of the Catholic church on the immorality of artificial contraception. All the church would permit was periodic continence as a means of spacing birth within marriage. The concept of solving the problem of expanding populations by self-restraint was considered by many to be unrealistic and, by some, laughable.

To many it appeared that the benefits to be gained from taking advantage of scientific advance in the area of population control was of such immensity that the church must be wrong. The Vatican felt pressure from some of the church's own moral theologians who focused on the complexities of applying broad principles of moral conduct to the frequently tangled thicket of real life. ("Thou Shalt Not Kill" is clear. But what if you're in an overcrowded lifeboat and one more survivor seeks to climb aboard?)

Father Curran concluded that the church's teaching on artificial contraception was wrong; that within marriage one could morally use chemical or mechanical means to separate the marital act from procreation, using responsibly the latest scientific advances to savor the joy of sex while avoiding pregnancy. If Father Curran were right, the benefits would be immense.

Although the issue within the church focused on sexual activity within marriage, many thoughtful people were convinced that acceptance of artificial contraception was bound to have a profound effect on other social problems such as pregnancy outside marriage, and on abortion, which was being vigorously pushed as the solution to unwanted pregnancies, whether within or outside marriage.

It soon became clear that the church's teaching had to be reviewed. If the church were wrong, it would have to be admitted, for to deny to the world what were viewed as the advantages of artificial contraception would be a far greater evil than the embarrassment of revising a long-held church doctrine.

A Vatican review started and a commission was appointed, consisting of clerics, moral theologians, and lay persons, married and unmarried.

The commission's report was a blockbuster: the majority said the church's teaching was wrong; that it was morally acceptable to use artificial means to separate the performance



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the sexual act from the risk of conception.

If a large part of the Catholic world was thrilled by the commission's report, it was stunned by the response of Pope Paul VI who, on July 25, 1968, issued his encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, rejecting the majority report of the scholars, the moral theologians, and the lay people on the commission.

Not only did Paul VI reject the report, but he used his epistle to carefully document his reasons. *Humanae Vitae* is poignant. One gets the sense of a pope acutely conscious of the social impact of his message: that all of the apparent benefits of artificial contraception are morally beyond the reach of the world; that one cannot morally use artificial means to separate the sexual act from the procreative process which is the essence of the marriage relationship; that persons, gifted with free will, must exercise that will and act with self-restraint within marriage, if sound judgment leads to a conclusion that pregnancy should be avoided. Sadly, the pope advised the faithful that you can't morally have your cake and eat it.

Paul VI cautioned that the acceptance of artificial contraception meant taking sexual intercourse out of the context of the human reproductive process and that to do so had potentially dire implications. He said: "Responsible men can become more deeply convinced of the truth of the doctrine laid down by the church on this issue, if they reflect on the consequences of methods and plans for artificial birth control."

If Father Curran reflected, and we assume he did, he concluded that the pope's position was unsound and mounted a fight against it. Father Curran found many followers; indeed, in the United States, polls quickly showed that the majority of the married laity rejected the pope's conclusions. To that majority, the "consequences" of acceptance of artificial birth control, of the separation of the act of sexual intercourse from the process of procreation, only offered potential benefits as young couples could enter into marriage free of the unpleasantness of a surprise pregnancy; free to engage in intercourse with no need for restraint; free now to plan their families within the confines of sound economics rather than chance. Sexual intercourse could now be an expression of love and affection unrelated to procreation, freed by science to have a life and meaning of its own; sexual intercourse would be like a handshake among friends, only more powerful in its implications and potentially more pleasurable.

And then strange things started to happen. For theologians like Father Curran, once you gave sexual intercourse an independent life of its own, it would follow that it was not only within marriage that one had occasion or a need to express affection. If sexual intercourse were essentially an expression of affection like a powerful handshake, it would be beyond argument that one could have affection for someone other than one's spouse. If sexual intercourse, coupled with artificial contraception, had a legitimate, independent status of its own, logically it could be exercised (with restraint to be sure) out-


**GRADUATE STUDIES IN THEOLOGY**

**AT BOSTON COLLEGE**

***The Department of Theology at Boston College, a leading Catholic university in an ecumenical setting, shares the resources of eight other schools in the metropolitan area through membership in the Boston Theological Institute.***

***The* M.A. DEGREE *may be earned in Theology or Biblical Studies.***
**DOCTORAL STUDIES *in the Joint Graduate Program with Andover Newton Theological School lead to the Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, History of Christian Life and Thought, or Christian Ethics; Biblical Studies may be pursued as a minor field.***

**The Faculty:**

Mary C. Boys, S.N.J.M.
Stephen F. Brown
Lisa Sowle Cahill
Francis X. Clooney, S.J.
Mary Daly
Robert J. Daly, S.J.
Harvey D. Egan, S.J.
J. Cheryl Exum
Miles L. Fay, S.J.
Ernest L. Fortin, A.A.
Thomas H. Groome
Margaret Gorman,R.S.C.J.
Charles C. Hefling, Jr.
Raymond G. Helmick, S.J.
A. Brandt Henderson
James Hennesey, S.J.
Robert Imbelli
Edward J. Kilmartin, S.J. (Visiting)
Philip J. King
Matthew L. Lamb
Frederick G. Lawrence
Claire Lowery
H. John McDargh
C. Sebastian Moore, O.S.B.
David Neiman
James A. O'Donohoe
Pheme Perkins
Susan M. Praeder
Ellen M. Ross
Louis P.Roy, O.P.
Anthony J. Saldarini
Margaret A. Schatkin
Francis P. Sullivan, S.J.
Thomas E. Wangler
James Michael Weiss

*For further information on graduate programs and resources, contact Dr. Lisa Sowle Cahill, Director of Graduate Programs, Box E, Department of Theology, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA 02167. (617) 552-3880*




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

side of marriage. Father Curran concluded that given the proper circumstances, fornication could be justified.

But another step was waiting. What if the object of your affection was, like yourself, another male? Human nature is such that attractions are without limit; attractions to liquor for the pleasure it gives; to narcotics for the exotic highs; to laziness; to greed. But certainly, it would not be wrong for one male to express his affection for another male by a handshake. But what of the super handshake of sexual intercourse? If, as Father Curran concluded, the sexual act could legitimately have an independent life of its own as an expression of affection, then responsibly exercised homosexual intercourse could be legitimate. Logical? Of course, if you start with the premise that within marriage sexual intercourse can legitimately be artificially separated from the procreative process.

And so Father Curran moved down what he perceived as a logical line to arrive at the legitimacy of masturbation, fornication, and sodomy. And he expanded his conclusions to the legitimacy of divorce, and even to the legitimacy, under vaguely defined criteria, of abortion.

We can assume that Father Curran carefully read Paul VI's encyclical. If he did, he read this admonition:

> Let them [who would reject the church's teaching on artificial contraception] first consider how this course of action could open wide the way for marital infidelity and a general lowering of moral standards. Not much experience is needed to be fully aware of human weakness and to understand that human beings, and especially the young, who are so exposed to temptation, need incentives to keep the moral law, and it is an evil thing to make it is easy for them to break the law.

If Father Curran did not have the vision to see where his reasoning would lead him, Paul VI clearly did. By the time *Humanae Vitae* was issued in 1968, it seems clear that large numbers of the faithful, led and perhaps encouraged by some moral theologians, rejected the teachings of the church on artificial contraception — and that was especially true of the young, who were ready to reap the benefit of marriages in which the joy of sex could be artificially separated from the responsibilities of sexual restraint.

If the social benefits of more stable, joyous marriages, an end to out-of-wedlock pregnancies, and a disappearance of abortion as a means of ending unwanted pregnancies were to come about, they have not surfaced in the years since *Humanae Vitae* was issued. On the contrary, Paul VI's warning of the "consequences of methods and plans for artificial birth control" appear each year to have been more profoundly prophetic.

Nearly nineteen years after *Humanae Vitae*, we look upon a society in which teenage pregnancy and venereal disease are at an epidemic level; marriages are disintegrating at an ever increasing rate; more and more children are being raised in homes with only one parent; the killing of the growing child within the womb has become an acceptable resolution to the inconvenience of new life; and sodomy is being championed as an acceptable alternate lifestyle for the young. While common sense would preclude laying the blame for all of these unhappy social developments solely at the doorstep of Father Curran's dissent, one thing is clear beyond argument: Paul VI had a clearer vision of where the acceptance of artifical contraception would logically lead then did Father Curran. And it is also clear that science has not found the magic substitute for restraint in the exercise of one's sexual faculties. In fact, the chemical and mechanical devices science touted as the instruments of its reform have been found to be the cause of grievous medical complications for many women.

Like a loving and gentle parent, the Vatican has, over the intervening years, sought to encourage Father Curran, as a loyal priest and respected intellectual theologian, to reappraise his conclusions. Instead, Father Curran moved farther away from his church as he followed the path of his own compelling logic, building always on the concept that science had at last enabled sexual intercourse to be given a life of its own, freed of the context of procreation within marriage.

In his encyclical, Paul VI had made a special humble, but most pointed appeal to priests as he said:

> We turn to you [priests] filled with great confidence. For it is your principal duty — We are speaking especially to you who teach moral theology — to spell out clearly and completely the church's teaching on marriage. In the performance of your ministry you must be the first to give an example of that sincere obedience, inward as well as outward, which is due to the magisterium of the church.

If Father Curran considered that call, directed to himself as a priest and theologian, he rejected it. Seemingly convinced that his own intellectual gifts were superior to that of the wisdom of his church, he instead proceeded to develop his own new morality. He stands today an advocate of the legitimacy not only of artificial birth control within marriage, but of divorce, masturbation, fornication, homosexual acts, and even abortion. He stands defiantly not only against the encyclical of Paul VI in 1968 but indeed of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans of nineteen-hundred years earlier.

If one were to test the question as to who won, Father Curran or the pope, on the basis of popular support for artificial



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

contraception within marriage, Father Curran arguably won.

If one were to test who won on the basis of measuring the consequences of the acceptance of artificial birth control, one would have to question whether marriages are more stable; whether young couples find it easier to take joy from their marriages and make them work; whether abortion and out-of-wedlock pregnancy have disappeared or have increased; whether more or fewer children are being raised in one-parent homes. And one would have to determine whether the plight of the developing nations and the threat of starvation has abated or grown.

But what is especially clear today is that Father Curran stands far removed from his church as he challenges the fundamental teachings, not only of the popes, but of the Old and New Testaments.

The epidemic of broken marriages, the broken homes, teen-age pregnancies, escalating homosexuality, and abortion are sad but dramatic evidence that Paul VI, who relied on the writings of St. Paul from the first century, was right. No longer need one speculate about the benefits to be achieved from the acceptance of artificial contraception. After nineteen years the results are in.

The question now presented is whether Father Curran, by his defiant rejection of his church, has forfeited the right to continue as a priestly agent of that church. Father Curran — a bright fellow, but seemingly slave to his conviction that his own intellectual powers are superior to those of his church and his pope — stands condemned by the passage of time.

Father Curran stands today, calling the faithful to a new path. Thoughtful Christians would do well to pause and reflect on the warnings of Paul VI and the experience of the last nineteen years before they fall in line to answer that call.

**CATHOLIC AUTHORITY, CATHOLIC THEOLOGY, CATHOLIC IDENTITY**

# CORRESPONDENCE

*(Continued from page 34)*

he really think that he knows the mind of the pope so well that he can suggest that the pope has no sense of perspective, no sense of irony, and no sense of humor? Should he not be more hesitant to think that the pope has no inner struggles and that he takes himself too seriously? Does Shea take himself too seriously with his litany of injustices which, important though they may be, pale in comparison with some of the deeper, global problems with which we the church are faced?

I wonder also what Shea thinks the precise status of papal positions should be. At times in his article Shea seems to allow the pope a special place as the legitimate leader of the church that he loves. At other times Shea seems to consider the pope's position just another among many. Which is it? Can we have it both ways? If we do not make a clear choice we at least need some clarifications and distinctions.

I am still left with Shea's question: how do I cope with the present situation? Shea reminds me to pray more and love more. I spend a lot of time attempting to understand. I remind myself that the church is in process, that it isn't finished yet. I root moderately for the Küngs and the Currans and the Hunthausens. Beyond this, though, I try my best to agree with and to comply with the teaching of the magisterium. Sometimes I ride the wave of a healthy tension. At other times, I am sure, I rationalize. What I haven't done, and what Shea hasn't done, is to stop trying.

DENNIS M. DOYLE

## Vatican on sex

Waltham, Mass.

*To the Editors:* Theologian William M. Shea indicates he is so distressed about the Vatican's admonitions on dissenters that "the present bishop of Rome is, to my mind, perilously close to losing his claim on our trust, obedience, and loyalty." He calls the Vatican's approach to the twenty-four nuns who signed the pro-abortion advertisement in the *New York Times* "outrageous."

But for all Shea's comments and observations it comes down to what he perceives as "the Roman Catholic leadership's inability and unwillingness to get itself straight on sex." Shea says "a large portion of the Catholic people will not take seriously a teaching on sexuality that has not taken seriously their experience and understanding."

Sebastian Moore writing in the same November 7 issue ("Ideas of Consequence") seems to have the same idea. "Whenever the Vatican talks about sex, it never seems to have in mind what people experience as sex, what they experience sex as," he says.

My personal experience and observations agree with the Catholic church's teaching on conjugal relations both in the positive and negative aspects. I fathered five children and then, because of medical circumstances, practiced "rhythm" for the next twenty years.

Where can you find a better description of marriage than in *Humanae Vitae?* Conjugal love, Pope Paul VI wrote, "is first of all truly human, that is to say, of the senses and of the spirit at the same time. It is not, then, a simple transport of

Since last spring when *Commonweal* published "Doctrine & Dissent: the Curran Case," we have received a considerable response from our readers. As time went on, the arguments surrounding the case became familiar, and then complicated by the Hunthausen case and by numerous other articles in our pages on authority and dissent. With only limited space at our disposal, we have decided not to publish the accumulated letters on the Curran case. We thank all of the readers who contributed to the deluge of mail on this issue. THE EDITORS



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

instinct and sentiment, but also, and principally, an act of the free will intended to endure and to grow, by means of the joys and sorrows of daily life, in such a way that the husband and wife become one heart and soul and together attain their human perfection . . . Children are really the supreme gift of marriage and contribute very substantially to the welfare of their parents."

When it comes to "experience," Pope Paul said in *Humanae Vitae*, "not much experience is needed to know human weakness" and how the availability of contraceptives would be "offering some easy means of eluding the observance" of the moral law.

But then he adds a prophetic sentence on how contraceptives turn women into sex objects and can lead to the destruction of a relationship: "It is also to be feared that the man growing used to the employment of anticonceptive practices, may finally lose respect for the woman and, no longer caring for her physical and psychological equilibrium may come to the point of considering her as a mere instrument of selfish enjoyment and no longer as his respected and beloved companion."

Americans have had the pill since the 1960s. I think the divorce rate is soaring to one in two because too many marriages degenerate into sex object relationships. LAWRENCE H. GRADY

## Hesitant to confront

Silver Spring, Md.

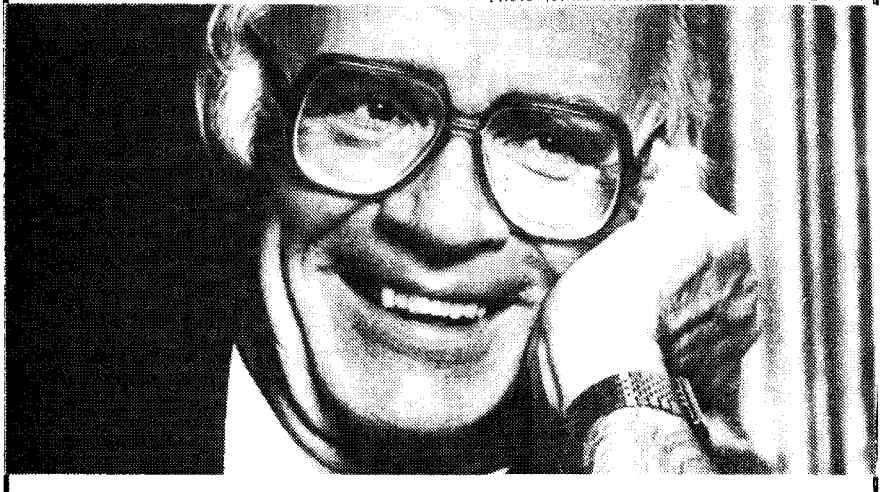
*To the Editors:* I should like to add a postscript to the dilemma posed by William M. Shea in his superb article. A growing crisis in the church today, it seems to me, is the alarming and increasingly acrimonious confrontation of those who see the church as an essentially hierarchical structure, and those who see it fundamentally as "the People of God" among whom the Spirit moves in many ways other than by caveats issued from on high. Recent Catholic experience in the U.S. (eg. Archbishop Hunthausen and Curran affairs) seems to bring this face-off into sharper focus. Whatever the Vatican's intention, its present emphasis on doctrinal rigor seems effectively to be polarizing advocates of authoritarianism and proponents of a "share the wealth of the Spirit" school of thought. A truly *catholic* church should embrace both with equal favor.

We should positively promote open and mutually forbearing dialogue after the method prescribed by Pope Paul VI (*Ecclesiam Suam*) which emphasizes clearness, meekness, trust, and prudence. Beyond that, persuasion should precede pronouncement, in virtue of the dignity of every human being; authoritative intervention should always be introduced at the lowest organizational level; and confrontation should be reserved to essentials, with due regard for the "hierarchy of truths." Pope John's words opening Vatican II still seem apt: "Nowadays...the Spouse of Christ prefers to make use of mercy rather than severity. She considers that she meets the needs of the present day by demonstrating the validity of her teaching rather than by condemnations."

Historian James Hitchcock of St.

*The first volume in the first comprehensive history of 20th-century religion in America by a man superbly qualified to write it*

Photo: John F. Rhodes, *The Dallas Morning News*



MODERN AMERICAN RELIGION

*Volume 1: The Irony of It All, 1893–1919*

Martin E. Marty

Martin E. Marty here embarks on a major four-volume work. In this first volume, he describes the individuals and movements that figured in American religion's first encounters with modernity. Narrating the story of thinkers such as Henry Adams, William James, and John Dewey and religious leaders such as Dwight Moody, Billy Sunday, and Mary Baker Eddy, Marty shows how, ironically, efforts to influence the course of religion often produced results very different from those intended. Illustrated. $24.95

University of Chicago Press



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Louis University raises the rhetorical question: "How far does pluralism go?" He then responds, "You can't have half the church with women priests and half without" — as though we don't already have a western church that is celibate, and an eastern church with married priests. Second, the American press has ascribed recent Vatican censures of certain Americans to "repeated complaints" of the highly conservative "15,000-member Catholics United for the Faith." It would be sad enough if in fact such an extreme and vociferous minority could so effectively influence the Vatican. Beyond that, it is certainly true that 20,938 signatures together with the support of 756 American Roman Catholic theologians failed to induce a more favorable disposition in the Curran affair.

At root, the problem seems to come down to an inevitable and proper tension between a hierarchy (historically never totally oblivious to vested interests) which is exceptionally oriented to tradition, in the sense of passing on what went before; and the *sensus fidelium* of all the People of God, in the sense that such reflects the current real-world distillation of the cumulative faith experience of the Christian community.

Vatican II noted that the "tradition which comes from the apostles develops in the church with the help of the Holy Spirit," and that dogma is historically conditioned: "The institutions, laws, and modes of thinking and feeling handed down from previous generations do not always seem to be well adapted to the contemporary state of affairs."

Genuine dialogue is our only hope. Both sides must listen. To paraphrase Cardinal Suenens, it may be of multiple significance that God gave us two ears but only one mouth. The church can never be a democracy, but Vatican II did introduce a notion of democratic participation in its emphasis on the part played by the People of God in ecclesial development. This contribution is not something so simplistic as a poll.

The simple fact is that we're all on a pilgrimage together, and while the hierarchy has a pre-eminent place in the parade, the *sensus fidelium*, no less than Scripture and tradition, plays a vital Spirit-led role in the formation of contemporary church consciousness. Salvation is everybody's business.

JACK WRIGHT

## If there is hope

New Milford, Conn.

*To the Editors:* I appreciated and was thrilled by William Shea's wonderful article. It was exciting and refreshing, and I feel if there is any hope for a future for Catholics it is in thinking such as his.

DORIS C. O'NEIL

## The author replies:

I am grateful for the many reactions to my essay, and I will respond to the few that space permits. To my colleague and friend Dennis Doyle who wishes me to worry about "deeper, global problems," I say that larger and smaller injustices are not unconnected, and all should be opposed. The papal policy toward Ameri-


"Absorbing, provocative, compulsively readable."
—*Walker Percy*

**"Strange, haunting, brilliant, and memorable...** How one young man from a Brooklyn Jewish family came to be converted to Catholicism, experienced the early airy headiness of that conversion, then lapsed. Gilman is really describing the apprenticeship of an intellectual—affecting, arduous, often funny, told in as fine a prose as anyone now writing."
—*Frederick Exley*

**"A complex, passionately honest, relentlessly self-examining man examines the mysteries and obligations of faith head-on.** A courageous work that demonstrates how timeless questions and longings will always reappear to those brave, sensitive, and imaginative enough to confront them."
—*Robert Stone*

A MEMOIR

Richard Gilman

Simon and Schuster
A G+W Company




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

can Catholics is of a piece with papal global policy that is affecting every aspect of church life. The attack on dissent and criticism is on principle and not *ad hoc*, and if this is so can we expect the church to face any problem squarely? Matters of freedom of communication, of the determination of moral and political values, of sexual morality, of the equality of women, are global problems for church and society, and they are not in any significant way restricted to an American or even Catholic perspective. Doyle's comment reminds me of that leveled at American feminists, that they shouldn't campaign for "bourgeois equality" while children starve. By the same token, then, the pope should not be concerned with Curran, Hunthausen, and women altar servers. Of course we must be discriminating, and I place a high value on freedom of communication and the duty to dissent publicly on significant issues, and do so even in my well-fed backyard, for I believe that our "deeper global problems" will not be faced or solved without them. Doyle's other interesting comments I will take up with him over a scotch.

Mr. Gordon points to qualifications on my loyalty to the pope. I do qualify it and do not thereby deny his leadership or God's love. It is essential to the church that all loyalty to human beings be qualified. I am forced to this on historical grounds (we have a plethora of vicious and mistaken ministers in our past) and on theological grounds (only the loyalty which has God as its object is unqualified). On ecclesial-political grounds I am opposed to the restoration of papal rule over the church. For all his many virtues and accomplishments, the present pope is an ecclesiastical restorationist first and last. He habitually acts to reverse the creative energies loosed in the church by his two predecessors of happy memory and to bolster the notion that the bishop of Rome is the bishop of the entire church. I regard this as a mistake for the church and for his office.

Mr. Wright put my own positive convictions neatly. Democracy should not be identified solely with a political movement or structure, for it has as well the profound moral meaning which Mr. Wright explicates so judiciously. The current leaders of the church attack the moral meaning, as did their predecessors, perversely collapsing the moral and political meanings. But the moral meaning is the single most important element in a healthy church life, no matter what the church's political structure. They apparently do not want anyone arguing with them even in the most respectful and serious way. They patronize us, they disregard our Christian life and intentions, and they thereby demean and injure their offices in the church. I see no reason why Catholics should sit by while they do this or applaud while the imperial papacy is restored. It is possible to honor the man's office and leadership while disagreeing vigorously with his policies, and I insist on the right of every Catholic to do so.

Finally, I apologize for the apodictic character of both my responses and some of the remarks in my essay. But one cannot say everything at once. Perhaps there will be opportunities to register qualifications.

WILLIAM M. SHEA


FAITH
ACTIVE IN LOVE

**WHY, O LORD?**
**Psalms and Sermons from Namibia**
ZEPHANIA KAMEETA
An outspoken Namibian preacher and theologian recasts the psalms with an African voice expressing the humiliation of South African blacks and their longing for liberation. "Africa is suffering," Kameeta states, "and the sorrow in her heart is so great that it almost crushes her." paper $3.95

**JESUS, LIBERATION, AND THE BIBLICAL JUBILEE**
**Images for Ethics and Christology**
SHARON H. RINGE
Illuminates how the Jubilee traditions in the Gospels become a source for Christian ethics and Christology. (*Overtures to Biblical Theology*) paper $8.95

**I BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY**
RUBEM ALVES
These provocative meditations, prayers, and questions by a Third World theologian present Jesus of Nazareth as God's answer to our questions. paper $4.95

**DIETRICH BONHOEFFER**
**A Life In Pictures**
EBERHARD & RENATE BETHGE, and CHRISTIAN GREMMELS, Eds.
A unique pictorial account of Bonhoeffer's life, family and friends, and of the Germany in which he lived and died. Contains over 500 photographs. cloth $29.95 until 4/1/87, $34.95 thereafter

**LAST LETTERS OF RESISTANCE**
**Farewells from the Bonhoeffer Family**
EBERHARD & RENATE BETHGE, Eds.
"...always thought-provoking and sometimes so poignant as to be painful." —JOHN D. GODSEY paper $7.95

**SPIRITUAL CARE**
DIETRICH BONHOEFFER
Clandestine talks (1935-1940) on the pastoral ministry emphasize that "true encounter is only facilitated through the spirit of Christ."
paper $4.95

At bookstores or from
**FORTRESS PRESS**
2900 Queen Lane
Philadelphia, PA 19129
**DIAL 1-800-FORTRESS**




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# TASTE & AFTERTASTE

## 'CRIMES,' 'MORNING AFTER,' 'LITTLE SHOP'

*Crimes of the Heart* survives its Southern Gothic mannerisms to qualify as the best among the many current film adaptations of plays. Playwright Beth Henley wrote a screenplay that opens up the action with just the right amount of flashbacks, and Australian director Bruce Beresford gets excellent teamwork from his three stars (Sissy Spacek, Jessica Lange, and Diane Keaton) as the survivors of a wacky, troubled family. Some of the wackiness is predictable and cartoonish, but the trouble is real, and the conclusion is one of the best depictions of family renewal in recent cinema.

The plot rests on foundations of black comedy: the sisters' mother committed suicide (hanging the family cat along with herself); Spacek tries homicide on her macho lawyer husband, schizophrenically alternating gunshots with offering him lemonade. Her considerable legal problems reunite her with her older sisters, who are both more limited by the cartoon aspects of their roles. One is an inhibited spinster whose insecurity allows Diane Keaton to lean heavily in the role on her Annie-Hall bag of fretful gestures. Jessica Lange enjoys herself, perhaps too much, as the other sister, a tart who fails as a country singer. Tess Harper plays a domineering, sanctimonious cousin, who regards the three sisters as embarrassing "black sheep"; her role allows for exaggeration, but, like other elements in the film, it's spread on too thickly.

The heavy hand does not prevail, however. Subtleties save *Crimes*, none finer than Spacek's portrayal of a mad waifdom in which lurks real sanity. In her marriage and attempted murder, Spacek embodies the complementary extremes of repression and anarchy which her two sisters express individually. Under her influence, Keaton finally, grandly, and constructively explodes at Harper. Later, when Spacek attempts her own suicide (in one of the most weirdly comic sequences in recent film), she moves Lange to unexpected depths of giving. Spacek has the advantage not just of the stronger part but of not having to put on a Southern accent, and therefore appears more natural than Lange and Keaton. Nevertheless, on her own merits she has quite rightly received the New York Film Critics' award as best actress in 1986 for her performance. *Crimes* is *Hannah and Her Sisters* from the sisters' point of view, and few scenes of women together outdo the lusty, spontaneous, expressive closing.

*The Morning After* traces an opposite arc: it starts out promisingly, then skids downhill. Director Sidney Lumet (his last film was *The Verdict*) begins the murder mystery with a long pre-credit sequence in which star Jane Fonda, playing an alcoholic, failing actress, wakes from a drunken stupor next to a man's dead body. She can't remember how she got there, and she can't remember if she did it. When she emerges in bewilderment onto Los Angeles streets, Lumet perfectly matches her inner desolation with shots of blank, open perspectives and monochromatic vistas: the credits then roll in cold light purple, set against the even colder white of airport terminals or the angry orange-red of a Chinese restaurant-supply warehouse. The only false note is the shot of a factory wall with a graffiti spray-painted alongside: "You are alone." No kidding.

The story that follows has all the flaws and none of the strengths of the opening. It mixes potentially rich elements of alcoholism, racism, ethnicity, pornography, destroyed careers, and of course the aforementioned dead body in a way that leaves them connected but never coherent.

Contrivances aren't the problem; they're part of the genre. *The Morning After* suffers because the parts never become a whole that resonates with any significance, despite the professionalism of performances by Fonda, Raul Julia as her separated husband, and above all Jeff Bridges as an ex-alcoholic ex-cop (he starred last year in a similar thriller, *Jagged Edge*). For one thing, one keeps on waiting, as in *Agnes of God*, for something more than professionalism from Fonda. Then there is the problem of suspense. There are rules for thrillers, the key one being that nothing is as it seems. When Julia tells Fonda, in an early scene, with earnest matter-of-factness that she ought to tell the police about the body, his tone is a dead giveaway: it's exactly what he ought to be doing to fool us, and so he doesn't. To be sure, Lumet creates some anxiety as the plot evolves; indeed, one of the annoying things about this kind of high-gloss thriller is getting involved without really caring about the characters. Whoever recalls Lumet's *The Verdict* will notice parallels between Paul Newman's drunk lawyer and Fonda's actress. There is no parallel in the sympathy they evoke.

*The Morning After* excels at limp echoes and missed details. At one point, Fonda laments, "I coulda been a contendah"—Marlon Brando's line from *On the Waterfront*—that is not even successful here as a self-conscious, semi-comic gesture. Lovers of thrillers will also be depressed by the gross neglect of such rich raw material as a white cat, a closet, a girl downstairs, and Nancy Drew mysteries. Each one of these is used, and then tossed aside, without even the energy of nuance normally given red herrings. *The Morning After*, finally, features some awful scenes (did they need them to earn the essential "R"-for-risqué rating?) when Fonda and Bridges clinch and some in-jokes about Bel Air, California. Lumet's *The Verdict* was a winner about a loser. *The Morning After* irons out the paradox.

*The Little Shop of Horrors* is a new film based on an off-Broadway musical based on an earlier film by Roger Corman, master of the schlock, low-budget, horror movie. It has trekked the route from grotesquerie through tunefulness to jolly absurdity without ever passing by good taste. Nevertheless, what it lacks (or completely violates) in manners, it sometimes compensates for in refreshingly bizarre humor. Jack Nicholson got his start in Corman's original version (known as "the film shot in two days"). The new movie sparkles at times



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

because of the excellent comic acting and singing of Ellen Greene, retained from the off-Broadway version.

Greene plays a flower arranger named Audrey, the model for Audrey II, a mysterious plant raised by Seymour Krelbourn (Rick Moranis), Prototypical Nerd. Seymour works in the same ghetto floral shop, and dreams of success, sex, and, specifically, Audrey. Seymour finds Audrey II by accident (during an unpredicted solar eclipse—are you following this?), but "little did he know" what it/her would bring him, or at what price. Like predecessors such as *The Thing*, Audrey II is not just your ordinary Venus-flytrap, but a vampire vegetable, who tempts Seymour with promises of power in return for "meat." If this *Faust in a Florist's* is your kind of plot, well, you may enjoy some of the lighter moments of *Little Shop*.

But often the film simply disgusts. The supporting cast is filled with recent American masters of unembarrassed sick humor such as Steve Martin (as a sadistic dentist), John Candy, James Belushi, and Bill Murray, who all enjoy themselves too thoroughly in their high camp roles, some as victims of Audrey II. There are also two mistakes in "its/her" casting. Audrey II was much more pitiable—and its/her demands for "meat" that much more comically absurd—when it/she was played as a silent orphan. When Audrey II acquires the recognizably black voice of Levi Stubbs (one of the Four Tops) late in the film, it is not just dramatically ineffective but racially bothersome.

Director Frank Oz uses a Motown-like choral group of three young black women for better comic purposes; they comprise a streetwise, mock heroic version of *Macbeth*'s Weird Sisters. Even better is Greene, who plays a sweet tart with sureheaded silliness. The film's best scene involves her song about happiness as a *Good Housekeeping* suburban housewife: "I'll cook like Betty Crocker and I'll look like Donna Reed." Howard Ashman, who adapted Corman to Broadway, wrote the screenplay and lyrics, and deserves some credit for such inspired moments. But are they worth the whole?

TOM O'BRIEN

# BOOKS

# Bewitched, bothered, & bedeviled

**MEPHISTOPHELES**
THE DEVIL IN THE MODERN WORLD
**Jeffrey Burton Russell**
**Cornell University, $24.95, 323 pp.**

**Francis Oakley**

In this intriguing book, the fourth in a series of related works, Jeffrey Russell brings to a triumphant conclusion the effort he began over a decade ago to trace the idea of the Devil ("the best-known symbol of radical evil") as it has developed across the centuries down to the present day. In *The Devil*, the first of these books (Cornell, $27.50, 276 pp.), he charted perceptions and personifications of evil from the cultures of antiquity to the New Testament era. In *Satan* (Cornell, $27.50, 258 pp.), he analyzed the diabology of the early Christian era down to the influential crystallization of the Western patristic tradition in the writings of St. Augustine. With *Lucifer* (Cornell, $24.95, $12.95 paper, 356 pp.), he arrived at his own period of particular expertise, outlining the ideas about the Devil prevalent during the Middle Ages, the great age of consistent diabology. And now, in *Mephistopheles*, having first delineated the deepening belief in the Devil fostered during the sixteenth century by the witchcraft craze and the theology of Luther, he goes on to describe the subsequent fragmentation of the traditional belief in the malign existence of a prince of darkness.

In the catechism of Canisius the name of Satan appears more frequently than that of Jesus (sixty-seven as opposed to sixty-three times), but a century later, with the discrediting of the witchcraft craze, the emergence of the rationalist and empiricist approaches to the understanding of the world, and the gradual growth of materialism, diabology began to run afoul the shoals of skepticism. "Milton's is the last convincing full-length portrait of the traditional lord of evil" and, by the end of the seventeenth century, the notion of the Devil as the personification of radical evil was giving way to the notion that demons were nothing more than symbols of an evil that was human. "Satan Expiring," therefore, is the rubric under which Russell discusses the decline of diabology during the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, when the very foundations of Christianity itself were called into question.

But what promised to be a death-bed scene had a curious ending. With the advent of Romanticism the recumbent figure of the Devil underwent an unexpected resuscitation, this time as "a powerful and ambivalent symbol," personifying, among other things "noble rebellion against autocracy." And that symbol then modulated, in the music, art, and literature of the nineteenth century, into the ironic and sometimes comic Mephistopheles. But if it is from that stock figure of skeptical modernity that Russell draws the title of his book, he ends it with the chastening insistence that



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the apocalyptic rigors of twentieth-century life have thrust the problem of radical evil into the forefront of the post-modern consciousness. So that for a truly contemporary theology the concept of the Devil is a matter not lightly to be dismissed.

In *Lucifer*, Russell was able to focus on the traditional diabology at its most consistent. That fact imparted to the book itself a higher degree of coherence and consistency than one can reasonably expect to find in *Mephistopheles*, where, confronting the disintegration of the tradition, he is forced to scan great sweeps of intellectual territory; from Luther to Baudelaire, the Faust book to Flannery O'Connor, Leibniz to C.S. Lewis, Goethe to Thomas Mann. Even more markedly than in the earlier volumes, he forced at times to essay something close to a general intellectual history. And that produces in the reader sensations akin to those experienced when traveling by train through countryside usually traversed by road: disturbingly unfamiliar glimpses of the familiar, seen from a radically different perspective and clad in darker hues.

But the virtues evident in the earlier volumes are evident here too: the same, seemingly effortless, lucidity; the same stubborn refusal to permit us to evade or explain away the fact that our lives are tragically shadowed by the continuing presence in our world of radical evil; the same unwillingness to permit the historiographic fashions of the day (or, indeed, the traditional boundaries dividing history from philosophy and theology) to impede progress towards his chosen goal.

To the general reader the last point may not appear to be of any great moment, but perhaps I may be permitted, as a fellow historian, to dwell on it with some insistence. Not least of all because most of Russell's originality and the power of his work to compel stems from the calm resolution with which he has apparently determined to swim against the prevailing historiographic currents of the day.

At the simplest level, he has done so by his very willingness to undertake the sort of grand project pursued in these four

*Under the shadow of such monstrous collective evils as Auschwitz and Hiroshima, the Romantic obsession with individual emotions fades to insignificance . . . Forms are filled out so that Jews may be herded efficiently into gas ovens, maps with anonymous coordinates are issued so that bomber crews may burn schools and hospitals without a twinge of conscience. In such a world the Devil surely finds it more effective to sit behind a desk than to roam the world like a lion.*

— Jeffrey Burton Russell
*Mephistopheles*

volumes: that of tracing the history of a concept over the course of millennia and multiple national and cultural boundaries. In a profession currently enamored of the virtue of "thick description" and the type of precision made possible only by microhistory or the painstaking attention to the density of highly confined and localized contexts, the inevitable exposure to error on the part of those foolhardy enough to embark upon more sweeping voyages through time has been sagely and widely canvassed. Rarely does one hear a mention of the marked interpretative distortions or impoverishment or perspective occasioned by simple ignorance of the longer history of an enduring tradition of thought. Hence the refreshing (if startling) impact of Russell's insistence that a given concept is "a coherent whole transcending time," something that can properly be understood only "in terms of its entire tradition" (*Satan*, pp. 20, 12).

At a deeper level, and sustaining that insistence, lies an even less fashionable but quite explicit set of metahistorical commitments. Namely, a blunt rejection of the "materialist" paradigm prevailing in so much of the historical thinking of our day, and a decision instead to pursue "a more idealist tack." As he says at the start of *Lucifer* (p.12) and in the clearest of his several statements on the matter:

> Throughout these volumes I have been drawing the history of a concept. My philosophy is unabashedly idealist: it assumes that ideas are important in themselves and that the social context in which they arise is less important for understanding the ideas than the other way around. I differ from the materialism presently dominant in the historical profession and deny that modern materialism possesses any objective framework within which or by which ideas are to be judged. Rather, the first function of history is to open our minds to the infinite wealth of possible world views and to help us to understand that our own view, whatever it may be, is precarious, limited, and open to sudden and radical change.

Hence the passion with which he insists that "History is not merely an intellectual exercise; it is a sacred calling" (*Satan*, p.19). Or, again, that "History is more than a game; it is the historian's life" (*The Devil*, p.40). Hence, too, the confidence with which he can claim that " 'The Devil' is best investigated by history, which does not make the faith as-

**CEO**
**RELIGIOUS**
**TELECOMMUNICATIONS**
**NETWORK**

Five-year-old expanding Catholic telecommunications network seeks dynamic President to direct staff of eighteen and administer and coordinate overall activities of the corporation under established policies and procedures. Network currently consists of 75 on-line affiliates. Services include educational, video and audio programming and teleconferencing/teletraining/electronic mail functions.

Position reports to a clerical /lay board.

A minimum of five years experience in the telecommunications industry required, to include total profit and loss responsibility for a corporate entity, with strong expertise in administration, financial planning, development of goals and objectives, marketing and technical operations.

Knowledge of the Catholic Church and church communication agencies on the national and local levels highly desirable.

*Send cover letter, resumé, references and salary requirements by February 23rd in confidence to:*

Search Committee,
U.S. Catholic Conference,
Department of Communication,
Suite 1300,
1011 First Avenue,
New York, N.Y. 10022.

EOE

*No phone calls, please* *Principals Only*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sumptions of theology yet can, unlike science, address "the phenomenon directly" (p.23). The history of that phenomenon (i.e., the changing concept of the Devil), embracing as it does such other knowing "as theology, mythology, and literature, . . . is superior to all other approaches," he says, "in that it includes them all" (p.12).

By many, no doubt, these will be dismissed as overweening claims, and Russell has more than once been accused of mixing his history with theology. With such accusations he can have, I suspect, little patience. If he has chosen to approach the mystery of evil using the techniques of a historian, he has clearly not been tempted to confine the mystery within the orbit described by those techniques. In *Mephistopheles*, as in its predecessor volumes, he is faithful to his pledge to speak "as a human being as well as a historian. It would be presumptuous and futile to deal with so fundamental a problem as evil without confronting it personally. If we take ideas seriously we must encounter them with our whole personalities" (*Lucifer*, p.13). After reading these splendid volumes, no one will be tempted, I suspect, to accuse him of any lesser undertaking.

# THE SEARCH FOR TRADITION

**THE DESOLATE CITY**
REVOLUTION IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
**Anne Roche Muggeridge**
**Harper & Row, $16.95, 219 pp.**

**Lawrence S. Cunningham**

Conservative Catholics have produced a number of books since the watershed events of the Second Vatican Council, documenting what they see as the excesses of the liberals and urging corrective action. They are chroniclers of liberal horror stories mined from the pages of *The National Catholic Reporter* (James Hitchcock), lamenters of liturgical decay (Louis Bouyer), investigators of transalpine conspiracies against Rome (Ralph Wiltgen), or demanders of an injection of steel into the compliant spines of the bishops (George Kelly). To these, and heavily dependent on their writings, we must now add the voice of Anne Roche Muggeridge, the Canadian-born daughter-in-law of the great Malcolm.

Muggeridge, who reluctantly concedes that the documents of Vatican II admit of an orthodox reading, is an old-school Catholic. She prefers Protestant Revolution to Protestant Reformation; while admitting to a bit of over-zealousness, she applauds the crackdown on modernists at the turn of the century; the current travails of Hans Küng, Leonardo Boff, and company please her almost as much as the limited right to use the Tridentine rite of the Mass recently granted by Pope John Paul II. In fact, she sees those latter events as the first signs of the coming counter-revolution to restore sanity to the church.

My guess would be that she and I are roughly of the same age; we lived through both the old Catholic order of things and were spectators/participants in the aborning of the post-Vatican II church. I say that because I can feel a sort of empathy for her deep distress at the loss of the Latin Mass of her youth, the callousness of heavy-handed "reformers" in their mania for the new, and the more baroque manifestations of dissent and/or rebellion. Where we part company is that she sees lesbian nuns telling and the other epiphenomena of the present-day church not as a sign of silliness, but as the essence of renewal.
but as the essence of renewal.

Far more distressing than that is Muggeridge's persistent willingness to


## Summer at Saint John's

Collegeville, Minnesota
1987

Join us at Saint John's for a summer of study, prayer, and community life. Work towards a Master's degree or take courses for personal renewal and up-dating. Graduate study in theology, liturgy, religious education, and pastoral ministry. JUNE 29 - AUGUST 7. Beautiful rural setting of woods and lakes. Courses and short workshops include:

Richard Dillon: Luke/Acts
Luke Steiner, OSB: Prophetic Tradition
Carl Peter: Christology
Kevin Seasoltz, OSB: Theology of Sacraments and Worship
Allan Bouley, OSB: Rites of Christian Initiation
R. William Franklin: Worship and Work in the Industrial Age
Don Saliers: Theological Foundations for Liturgical Music
Herwig Arts, SJ and Helen Rolfson, OSF: History and Psychology of Discernment of Spirits
Columba Stewart, OSB: Monastic History
Michael Cowan: Development of Religious Identity
Evelyn Woodward, RSJ: Spiritual Direction
Frank Kacmarcik: Building or Renovating a Church: Vision and Practicality
Bernard Evans: Rural Social Issues
Christianne Brusselmans and Christopher Walker: Rites of Christian Initiation of Children (June 27–July 2)

SCRIPTURE AND HISTORY STUDY IN JERUSALEM

FINANCIAL AID AVAILABLE

For complete summer catalog contact:
Assistant Dean for Students
School of Theology, Room 119
Saint John's University
Collegeville, Minnesota 56321
(612) 363-2102

School of Theology
Saint John's University




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

misstate what scholars say (her grasp of theology is, let us say, a tad thin) and then, on the basis of that misstatement, to derive consequences from it. Let me cite one specific example. She claims that the "modernist" biblical scholars of today reduce the resurrection to a subjective experience of the early disciples. Later in her book she uses this assertion to insist that nobody would live in fidelity to a religious vision based on subjective religious experience. The problem is that the alleged modernists she cites (Raymond Brown, Pheme Perkins, Edward Schillebeeckx) to a person all explicitly deny that the resurrection was a purely subjective experience. She either knows that and misrepresents them or she has not read the people whom she excoriates.

Like Andrew Greeley, but reaching far different conclusions, Muggeridge sees the *Humanae Vitae* controversy as the signal event of the post-conciliar church. She gives us a rather lengthy review of the matter because if offers an opportunity to indict the German theologians (notably Bernard Häring), scold the late Paul VI for a lack of toughness, and praise the current pontiff for his use of this doctrine as a touchstone of orthodoxy. She would agree with John Ford and Germain Grisez that the ban on contraception could (and probably should) be papally defined in an infallible pronouncement. Then, as they say in the Deep South, liberals would have to fish or cut bait.

The basic problem with this book is not that it is a conservative critique, but that it is so deficient in its sense of history, so simplistic in its understanding of the Catholic tradition, and so drenched in nostalgia for a period in the church's history which is, for better or worse, long gone. Those who feel a visceral sympathy for a conservative critique of recent events in the church would do better to read a more sophisticated account like the little noticed work of William McSweeney entitled *Roman Catholicism: The Search for Relevance* (St. Martin's Press, 1980) where one finds analysis instead of axe-grinding. The axe-grinding, by the bye, would be less odious if it were not done by maligning the names of good and honest persons. Her treatment of Father Raymond Brown (whose first Mass I served more than thirty years ago), a member of the Vatican's biblical commission, is ignorantly malevolent.

Towards the end of her book Muggeridge makes an impassioned plea for a deeper sense of the pre-Vatican II church. She then says that one small step, symbolic but crucial, would be to turn the altars around and have the celebrant once again face God instead of the people. Such a gesture would emphasize the role of the priest as a mediator between congregation and God; it would also mitigate the current tendency to see the priest as simply the president of the liturgical assembly. I suggest that Muggeridge encourage her friends in Catholics United for the Faith to mount yet another letter-writing campaign to demand that this be done. It is a scandal that for centuries popes have stood under Bernini's baldachino facing the congregation when saying Mass. I warn her, however, that such deviations are hard to root out; there is much evidence that such modernist architectural arrangements were also common in the sixth-century churches of Ravenna.

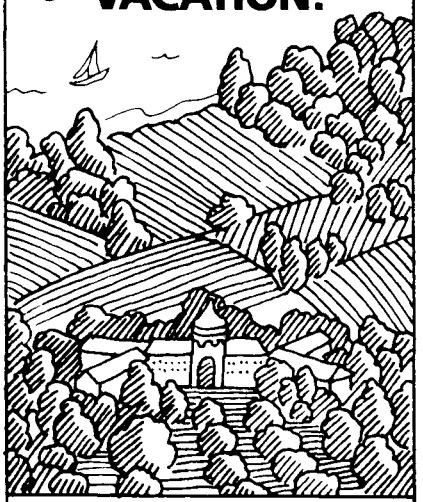
## IN BRIEF

JUSTICE IN THE MARKETPLACE: COLLECTED STATEMENTS OF THE VATICAN AND THE U.S. CATHOLIC BISHOPS ON ECONOMIC POLICY, 1891-1984. *Edited by David M. Byers, with introductions by John T. Pawlikowski. Office of Publishing, United States Catholic Conference, $14.95, 520 pp.*

This is a major sourcebook of Catholic social thought articulated by the papacy and the bishops of the United States in the last century. As such, it is a useful reference tool capable of shaking the conscience. The general introduction, as well as introductions to specific documents, all by John T. Pawlikowski, are inviting and succinct. They point out relevant themes, trace their development or truncation, and establish their appropriate historical and ecclesial contexts.

Many of the entries will have passed readers by, particularly the American


**EARN A MASTERS IN THEOLOGY DURING SUMMER VACATION.**



**INTERNATIONALLY RESPECTED FACULTY AND GUEST SPEAKERS**

An excellent resident faculty is complemented by outstanding guest lecturers.

**DEGREE SPECIALIZATIONS**

Students may specialize in Scripture, Theology, Pastoral Liturgy, Pastoral Ministry, and Spirituality in the Master of Arts Program.

**FLEXIBLE SCHEDULES**

The School offers: Fall, Spring, and Summer-only study options, three and six week summer courses, four day weeks, and day and evening classes.

**COSTS THAT AREN'T UNGODLY**

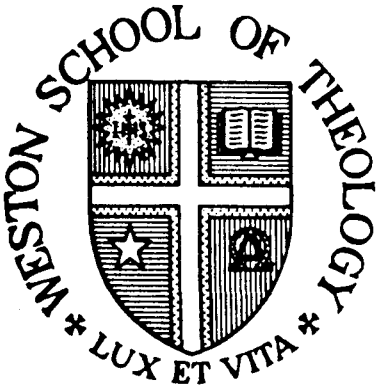
Rock-bottom room and board on a beautiful campus located a short walk from beaches and fifty minutes from Manhattan. Minimum tuition.

For further information, call or write: Dr. William Vendley, Associate Dean, **Seminary of the Immaculate Conception** Huntington, Long Island, N.Y. 11743 Tel. (516) 423-0499




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

**WESTON SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY**
**Cambridge, Massachusetts**




**1922-1987**
**A National Jesuit Theological Center**
**Announces a New Program in Spirituality**

There will be 3 Core Courses
in Biblical Spirituality;
Theology of the Spiritual life;
History of Spirituality
and
Elective Courses in spirituality
and spiritual direction.

The Spirituality Concentration
can be done within the
Master of Theological Studies (M.T.S.)
degree or the Master of
Theology (Th.M.) degree

**For further information contact:**

**Rev. J. Frank Devine, S.J.**
**Weston School of Theology**
**3 Phillips Place**
**Cambridge, MA 02138**
**(617) 492-1960**

Contact Father Devine for information about any of our other degrees and programs

documents. But their relevance to the present process of composing a contemporary U.S.-Catholic statement on economic matters is nothing less than substantive. They also demonstrate that a number of vexing questions—e.g., the gross inequality of the distribution of goods, and the disastrous economic consequences of the arms race (c.f., the U.S. bishops' 1931 statement)—have not only been raised in previous studies, but answered in sometimes prophetic, even radical terms. This tenor is reinforced by including (as an appendix) the 1983 Canadian bishops' statement for a "radical inversion" of the structures of the Canadian economy in light of Christian moral principles. The pointedness and brevity of the Canadian document could serve as a model for future papal and episcopal letters.

The volume provides ready access to a body of thought too little known, and too little heeded.

P.J.

'THE FIRST COMING,' AGAIN

# QUESTIONS OF ARGUMENTATION

## THOMAS SHEEHAN'S HISTORICAL METHOD

In 1984, *Commonweal* published an extended discussion of an essay in which Thomas Sheehan argued that a "liberal consensus" of Catholic scholarship had effectively dismantled the church's traditional beliefs and should logically issue in a position that abandoned the Resurrection and post-Resurrection claims of Jesus' divinity.

Last spring, no doubt because of this earlier debate, Random House sent *Commonweal* a copy of a manuscript in which Sheehan developed his positions at book length. The publisher asked whether we were interested in publishing an excerpt of this forthcoming book, *The First Coming*. We replied that we did not find a suitable excerpt but, given the interest stirred by the earlier discussion, the magazine would make every effort to publish a review of the Sheehan book immediately upon its publication—which was announced for early June. To meet this deadline, the editors sent the manuscript copy to a reviewer, William M. Thompson, the author of a widely praised book, *The Jesus Debate*. Neither the editors nor Mr. Thompson were aware that this typescript copy was incomplete. In principle, reviews should not be published unless the final, bound copy of the book can be checked; in reality, review copies of finished books are not infrequently received in our office only after publication date, and the editors of this journal know from experience here and from writing for other journals that reviews must often be done from earlier versions *if the reviews are to appear promptly upon the book's official publication date*. That was what we had promised Sheehan's publisher; that was why we urged the reviewer to send us his review, which was duly published in the June 20, 1986 *Commonweal*.

In the meantime, however, the publication date of the Sheehan book had been delayed. The announcement of this change in schedule was sent to our office (then preparing for a move)—and went unnoticed. Our efforts to make sure that *The First Coming* did not receive a belated review in these pages resulted in its receiving a premature review and one written from an incomplete text.

We regret this mix-up, about which

## REVIEWERS

FRANCIS OAKLEY, *former president of the New England Medieval Conference and the author of many books on medieval history, is the president of Williams College.*

LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM *is professor of religion at the Florida State University in Tallahassee. His most recent book is* The Catholic Faith *(Paulist).*

PATRICK JORDAN *is an assistant editor of* Commonweal.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

## CLASSIFIED

RATES: 75¢ a word, one time; 68¢, three times; 64¢, six times; Classified payable with order; monthly in advance for more than three times. COMMONWEAL, 15 Dutch St., NYC 10038.

### Priesthood

DESIRE PRIESTHOOD? Vocation certain? Call 1-800-633-2252. Father Nigro Gonzaga University, Spokane 99258.

### Biblical Institute

22nd Biblical Institute, Trinity College, Burlington, VT 05401, June 21-26, 1987. Faculty: Elizabeth Achtemeier, Paul Achtemeier, Joseph Agius, Peter Ellis, Wilfrid Harrington. Write: Sister Miriam Ward.

### Booklet

Chess, Stonehenge, Metaphysics. Astonishing interrelationships. Promote enlightment. $10: Chess Study, 1226 Haight San Francisco, 94117.

### Fundraiser

Profitable Fundraiser. Sample $1. L/SASS: Meditech, 3494 Washington, Cleveland, Ohio 44118.

### Game

Get Closer To Your Parents! While There's Still Time. "Generations . . . the Game" enriches adult-child visits with parents. Strengthens emotional aspects of relationship. Builds poitive communication, understanding. $24 + $4 shipping. Generations, P.O. Box 41069 (c), St. Louis, MO 63141.

### Education

At a crossroads on the Journey? The new residential program at St. Benedict Center, Madison invites people of all ages and backgrounds who seek spiritual growth, social change, or reflective time and space in a supportive, challenging "school of the spirit" to spend one, two, or three 10-week terms in community with

For a catalog and full information, Parker J. Palmer, Dept. 47, St. Benedict Center, Box 5588, Madison, WI 53705.

Mr. Sheehan has understandably complained. It was certainly not the fault of our reviewer, William M. Thompson. Out of fairness to the book, its author, its potential readers, and (not least) to Mr. Thompson, we have asked the latter to revise or expand upon his earlier review in light of the published text.

THE EDITORS

I have now had a chance to study Thomas Sheehan's *The First Coming* (Random House, $17.95, 287 pp.) in its published form. I wrote my earlier review in good faith that I was working from the finished product. For the most part, my typescript copy turns out to have been missing the notes for Parts Two and Three, an absence which I noted and questioned in my review. So far as I can tell, there are no other crucial differences between the finished book and the version I worked with formerly.

The importance of these notes for Parts Two and Three should not be exaggerated. They do show that the author was aware of some of the important alternative positions. Insofar as my earlier review might have indicated otherwise, it now needs correction. For example, referring to Sheehan's interpretation of the Resurrection experiences, I expressed disappointment that "the reader will find no sustained treatment (in fact, hardly a mention) of alternative reconstructions." Certainly I would amend that "hardly a mention." I cannot, however, amend my expression of disappointment. It is one thing to be aware of alternative positions; it is something else to engage them in a sustained way, arguing the issues pro and con in a dialogical manner. It seems to me that these notes do not usually do the latter. They are important, helpful, and speak well for the author's research and scholarship. But in terms of sustained argumentation or simply in terms of quantity, they do not add some radical new dimension to the book.

Let us, however, stay with these notes for a moment. I would single out note 20 of Part Two (pp.257-58) as particularly important for the reader. Here Sheehan states, "In this chapter I generally follow Pesch, but without intending to exclude


SPEAKING THE TRUTH

*Ecumenism, Liberation, and Black Theology*

**James H. Cone**

*"James Cone is the premier black theologian writing today. And this book is vintage Cone—prophetic, passionate, pertinent, and provocative."*

—CORNEL WEST

A driving concern to speak the truth with love, courage, and care for the poor and voiceless is richly and powerfully evident in this collection of recent essays by James Cone.

Cone addresses topics of black theology and its relationship to other Christian theologies and secular ideologies, the role of the black church in American history, Christian faith and political praxis, and the unique features of black worship.

*"A helpful, substantial, and thoughtful work. . . . I am increasingly impressed with the growing maturity of Cone's writing, and this certainly marks one of his finest books to date."*

—HARVEY COX

*"A valuable contribution to ongoing religious dialogue."*

—*BOOKLIST*

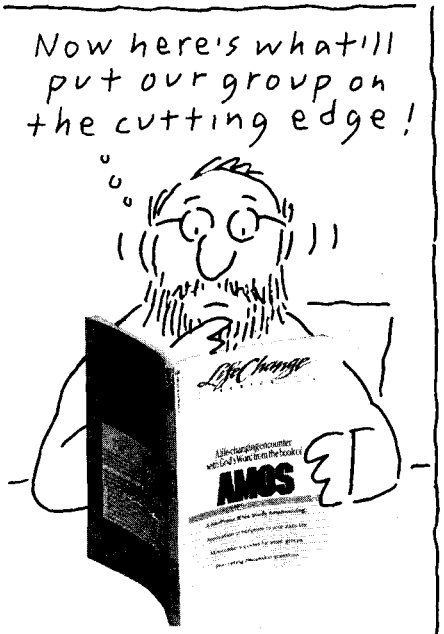
Paper, $8.95

671

At your bookstore, or write:
WM. B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING CO.
255 JEFFERSON AVE. S.E. / GRAND RAPIDS, MICH. 49503



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED




It's *Amos*, a new LifeChange Bible study workbook. You won't just be filling in the blanks. You'll be challenged to struggle for values that can't rust, spoil, or get unseated in the next election.

$3.95 + postage. Call today, we'll ship by tomorrow on Visa/MasterCard orders. *For a free catalog, call or write:*

NAVPRESS

Dept. C-738, Box 6000, Colo. Spgs, CO 80934
TOLL FREE (800) 525-7151

THE MEXICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER

**FUTURE MISSIONERS TO LATIN AMERICA**

The Mexican American Cultural Center (MACC) and the Secretariat for Latin America of the NCCB/USCC offer:

**A Specialized Missionary Training Program (LAP)**

**FOR WHOM:** English-speaking persons (lay, religious and priests) who wish to prepare for mission to Latin America.

**REQUIREMENTS:** A basic knowledge of Spanish and a sending community.

**PROGRAM CONTENT:** • A transcultural living experience.
• An intensive theological/socio-cultural training program.

**DATES:** Aug. 2 to Nov. 6, 1987. (Language studies may be taken at MACC in conjunction with the Latin American Program as needed.)

**CONTACT:** Larry Boudreau, Coordinator-LAP/MACC, P.O. Box 28185, 3019 W. French, San Antonio, TX 78228. Tel: (512) 732-2156.


Schillebeeckx's hypothesis. What they have in common lies at the center of my presentation: that the disciples required no special 'risen-Jesus events' in order to come to Easter faith." If this is an example of careful use of other scholars, then indeed one might legitimately raise serious questions about the validity of the argumentation found in these pages. Both Pesch and Schillebeeckx come from quite different faith presuppositions than the author: neither claims to be a "post-liberal" or even "post-Christian" Christian. Neither intends his work to be used as an argument against the Christian faith or the centrality of Jesus for faith. This needs to be said, surely. Also, Schillebeeckx, at least, argues quite explicitly that his views can't be read as denying the "logical" and "ontological" priority of Jesus' personal resurrection. Sheehan refers to this, in fact, in his note 75 (p. 270). When all of this is borne in mind, one wonders what Pesch and Schillebeeckx have in common with Sheehan. Can one separate horizons of interpretation from historical reconstructions in the way Sheehan at times tends to do?

This separation of faith presuppositions from historical reconstruction is, I think, far from confined to an occasional note. I have the impression that the author slides, way too quickly, over the "hermeneutical circle" in interpretation, claiming for himself much more "objectivity" and solidity of evidence than the case warrants. On page 27 he refers to Boethius's notion of yoking together faith and reason: ". . . *fidem, si poteris, rationemque coniuge*." (The citation is from Volume 64 of Migne, not 63, as the book indicates on page 273, note 28.) Here I would expect Sheehan to think this through in the way that the medieval tradition practiced it: the work of reason is never separated from faith but is an "extension" or partial development of faith.. But listen to the author's interpretation: "Today we might paraphrase his [Boethius's] dictum as follows: Faith, if it is possible and if it is to be responsible, can never escape from history or ignore the evidence that history provides. That very evidence is what has brought Christianity to the foundational crisis it is now living through."

I suppose there are a number of ways to read this. On the basis of the book's internal evidence, I have the impression that the author wants to bend the axiom in a more "positivistic" or "secularistic" direction: first we practice history, then we join faith to it (or not, depending upon what history turns up). Surely the quite extensive discussion of the hermeneutical circle deserves better than this!

By the way, it is, I suggest, this quite problematic use of the historical method which enables the author to claim that he is "building upon" the work of other post-Bultmannian "moderates" and "liberals" in his own "reconstruction." I rather suggest that the latter would have a difficult time being persuaded of this. This same "method" also peeks out at us rather glaringly on page 225. There the author states, "To hear the message of the kingdom of God 'without Jesus,' that is, without attributing to the prophet any unique or extraordinary powers, means to take Jesus *as* his word [*at* his word? — WMT]. That means cutting through the words and deeds in which Jesus preached the kingdom of God, in order to discover what gave rise to those acts and made them possible." "Cutting through" seems a peculiarly poignant verbal form for the kind of hermeneutics all too often found in these pages.

This tendency to ignore the delicate relationship between one's larger philosophical-theological horizon and one's historical reconstruction also has further consequences. The sagacious reader of this provocative book ought at least to think of some of these further issues.

For example, Sheehan says a number of times that he "goes beyond" the positions of the traditionalist or moderate or liberal on the issue of the Resurrection (e.g., p. 165) or he says his purpose is "to surpass rather than to repeat the mainline Christian interpretation of Jesus, both in its traditional and in its more modern 'liberal' form" (pp. 26-27). This talk of *going beyond* or *surpassing* raises interesting issues. On what grounds is he surpassing? By what criteria does he know his position to be superior in terms not only of historical "data"—which I suggest cannot be separated from larger

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

philosophical-theological positions—but also in terms of a larger, more foundational horizon of thought and practice?

There is a kind of gnosis here (I'm referring to Sheehan's text, not to his personal intentions, which are of course beyond my purview), a kind of idiosyncratic claim for the greater value of one's largely unprobed position. This gnostic tendency to (at least precipitously) "exalt" one's point of view also goes along well with the the kind of psychologistic or largely "hunch-making" form of exegesis practiced throughout this work. Gnosis, wherever it exists, tends to be rich in projection and fantasy. Paul Ricoeur speaks of the Romanticist hermeneutics as one of psychological projection of the intentions/events behind a text. This sort of hunch-making, unrestrained by the textual-literary evidence, is appealing, I would suggest, to a kind of gnostic overvaluing of the kind of positions represented here.

There are of course other facets of this work which remain troubling to me, but perhaps my earlier review will suffice for those matters. What I have been pointing to here is the matrix out of which the author proceeds. It is this matrix which is unprobed, and from it flows far too much, whether in the text I had earlier or in the published book's additional notes, for such a fragile thing to sustain.

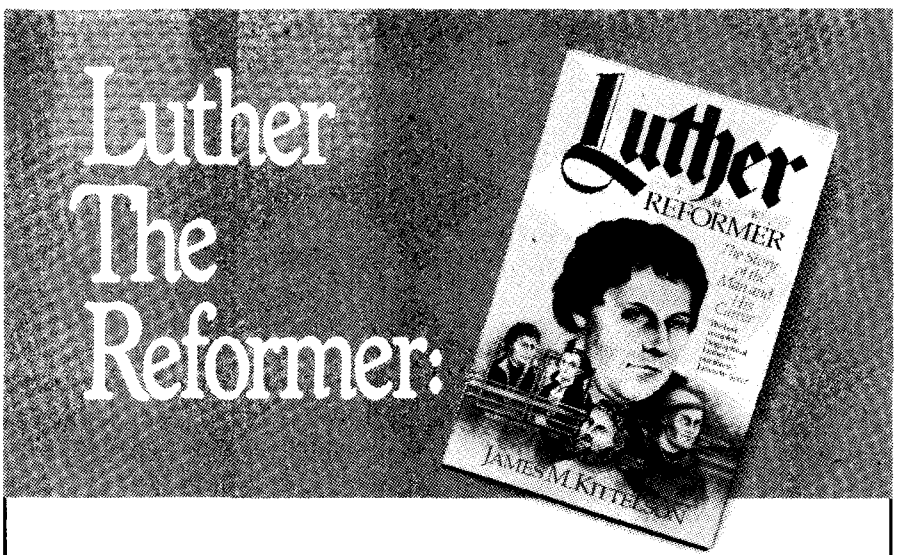
I don't want to push my complaint of gnosis too far, and again I remind the reader that I am referring to Sheehan's *text*, which has undergone a distancing from the author. But there are fruitful connections to be explored between gnosis and the flight from the incarnational (that is, from the christological principle that we can't do it alone—as Sheehan suggests we can—but that we rely upon the Divine as mediated to us through our frail, human history), and from soteriology (that is, our humble awareness of our frail and even sinful nature).

Finally, I think there are serious issues in christology and theology in general which need much more discussion and debate. We theologians need a renewed discussion with the a-theistic position, which all too often is simply ridiculed in these name-calling and "restorationist" days. Sheehan's book will perhaps foster such a renewed exchange.

But there are issues beyond those raised by Sheehan which need sustained thought as well: Trinitarianism, hermeneutics, the feminist critique, the relationship between the world's religions and Christianity, spirituality and soteriology, etc. The issues raised by Sheehan, while important, are somewhat narrow in range and reflective of a rather limited academic segment of the population. The range of alternatives he presents are also not as rich as the range many of us see.

WILLIAM M. THOMPSON

*(William M. Thompson is associate professor of theology at Duquesne University and author of* The Jesus Debate, *published by Paulist Press.)*


**The new standard one-volume biography of Luther. A milestone publishing event from Augsburg.**

*"...The best complete biography of Martin Luther."* Lewis W. Spitz.

Dr. James Kittelson, Ohio State Reformation historian, has drawn on the most recent scholarship and research and yet produced a book that reads like a novel. Lavishly illustrated with photos and woodcuts, with fresh information and insight, it presents Luther in every phase of his life—from peasant's son to monk—to pastor and defender of the faith. It brings to life this fascinating, brilliant, yet down-to-earth reformer. Destined to be a classic.
**Cloth. $24.95**

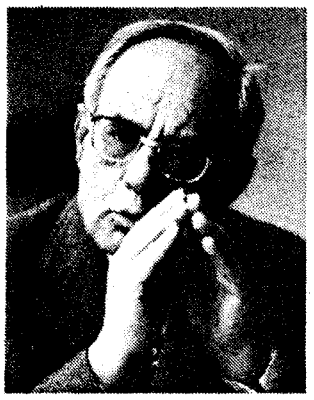
At your bookstore or
Augsburg Publishing House
Minneapolis, MN 55440
(Add $1.00 for mail orders)

AUGSBURG




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# NEW CROSSROAD CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY
## IN THE TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE



**Karl Rahner**
### KARL RAHNER — IN DIALOGUE
**Conversations and Interviews 1965-1982**

This collection conveys a cross-section of Rahner's thought. "For all 'sane' theologians and faithful Christians this book comes as a special grace from the Holy Spirit at this moment in the life of the Church. Recommended most urgently." —*Best Sellers*
352pp $22.50

**Edward L. Greenstein and Alex Preminger, editors**
### THE HEBREW BIBLE IN LITERARY CRITICISM

A unique, comprehensive overview of writings about the Hebrew Bible by commentators from ancient times to the present.
640pp $65.00

**John Dillenberger**
### A THEOLOGY OF ARTISTIC SENSIBILITIES
**The Visual Arts and the Church**

This lavishly illustrated volume centers upon a theological understanding of the visual arts, and how they can be reincorporated into Christian religions. Essential reading for those interested in the current state of church art and architecture.
280pp illus. $22.50

**A. H. Armstrong, editor**
### CLASSICAL MEDITERRANEAN SPIRITUALITY
**Egyptian, Greek, Roman**

A groundbreaking book that explores the archaic aspects, combined with intensely sophisticated thinking and feeling, that has contributed to the abiding beauty, interest and power of classical mediterranean spirituality. Volume 15 in *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*.
536pp illus. $49.50

**John Macquarrie**
### THEOLOGY, CHURCH & MINISTRY

The great theologian marks the fiftieth anniversary of his pilgrimage in theology with a book that sums up his life work and points to the future.
224pp $19.95

**Tatiana Goricheva**
### TALKING ABOUT GOD IS DANGEROUS
**The Diary of a Russian Dissident**

An inspiring, first-person account of the "underground church" in the Soviet Union. The author, now in exile, recounts her conversion, in a dramatic true story showing faith in God is stronger than fear.
144pp $11.95

**Herbert Vorgrimler**
### UNDERSTANDING KARL RAHNER
**An Introduction to His Life and Thought**

Written by a close friend and colleague, this view of Rahner reveals the inner drives behind the indefatigable work. "An excellent beginning in understanding the theologian who has been called the architect of Vatican II." —*Catholic Standard*
176pp $15.95

**Hans Küng**
### THE INCARNATION OF GOD

In this major new book, bestselling theologian Hans Küng examines the enduring significance of Hegel in contemporary theology. March, 1987.
660pp $34.50

---

At your bookstore,
or call 1-800-638-3030

**The Crossroad Publishing Company**
**370 Lexington Avenue**
**New York, NY 10017**



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED